

# KENNEDY, KHRUSCHEV AND BERLIN



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## PREFACE

My experiences during the Berlin crisis were so intense that I felt a need to reconstruct what happened. One of the more interesting consequences of this re-creation of events was how much I learned of the context in which the Berlin crisis was played out. Since I was at times more involved with some aspects than others, I also gained a more rounded picture of the crisis itself. For example, for the first two years my work on the Berlin Task Force was concerned primarily with planning and operations. While I followed the parallel "negotiations" track on which some of my colleagues were moving, my study has given me a better appreciation of the relationship between the two.

You will find a bibliographical note at the end of this manuscript, which indicates the document sources used. I also drew on my recollections, particularly regarding the management of the crisis.

Since memories are unreliable sources, I took the precaution of having several colleagues who were familiar with the events read each chapter. I am particularly indebted to Martin J. Hillenbrand, who read the entire manuscript. Since

the Berlin crisis is open to numerous interpretations, they did not always agree with mine, and I accept full responsibility for the views expressed.

I should also like to thank Mrs. Marilyn Knowles and Mrs. Betty Granger for typing this manuscript.

John C. Ausland  
Washington, D. C.  
April 1, 1967

## INTRODUCTION

Of all the unfinished business which John F. Kennedy inherited from President Eisenhower, none caused him more heartache than Berlin. He arrived in office half expecting--but hoping to avoid--a crisis over the city. Shortly after his debacle at the Bay of Pigs, he flew to Vienna to confront his antagonist--Nikita Khrushchev. This encounter led to a test of wills which permeated world politics for the next sixteen months, until it brought the world to the edge of the precipice.

The climax was in a way ironic, since both Kennedy and Khrushchev were haunted by the specter of nuclear war. Both of them warned repeatedly that it would sacrifice hundreds of millions of lives and lead to utter devastation. Deeply impressed by the briefings he had received on US war plans, Kennedy emphasized to Khrushchev his concern that neither of them miscalculate the other's intentions. Khrushchev expressed indignation. How dare Kennedy suggest that the leader of a great power like the Soviet Union might miscalculate? Yet, he returned to Moscow and proceeded to do just that.

Following the Vienna meeting, the Berlin crisis evolved into a series of critical incidents. They were centered on

the erection of the wall, a confrontation between Soviet and American tanks in the middle of Berlin, a Soviet attempt to control flights by civil aircraft, and three days of rioting near the wall. A year after the crisis reached its climax over Cuba, armed US and Soviet troops faced each other on the Autobahn. The crisis only ended after Kennedy's death, with the signature of a treaty between the Soviet Union and East Germany.

Interwoven with this turmoil were Kennedy's desperate efforts to encourage Secretary Rusk to find a path to the conference table. This was not an easy climb, in view of the obstacles Khrushchev had thrown up, DeGaulle's insistence that he make the ascent without him, and Adenauer's misgivings about the route chosen by Kennedy.

Berlin was also at the center of the young President's efforts to teach an old bureaucracy new tricks, and Foggy Bottom and the Pentagon have yet to recover from his onslaught.

These, then, are the threads of our story--a test of wills between a new American President and a veteran Soviet leader, the critical incidents this precipitated, the efforts to apply traditional diplomatic techniques, and the struggle to adjust the conduct of business to an impatient President in a nuclear world.

## KENNEDY, KHRUSCHEV, AND BERLIN

### CHAPTER 1. PRELUDE TO CRISIS: VIENNA

Senator John F. Kennedy predicted in 1960 that the next President might be confronted with an ultimatum on Berlin. After taking office, however, he was not anxious to take up Eisenhower's debate with Khrushchev. He made no reference to Berlin in his Inaugural Address. When this omission was noted with apprehension by the Germans, he made the barest reference to the city in his State of the Union message.

For a while it looked as though the mood of optimism with which the New Frontier arrived in Washington might be warranted. Khrushchev sent Kennedy a warm message on his Inaugural. A short time later, he released two American flyers who had been shot down in 1960 by Soviet planes. In a note in February to Adenauer, Khrushchev referred to the new President as an improvement over the old. A few sprouts pushing through the earth during a warm February, however, do not mean that winter is over.

#### 1. Maneuvering before Vienna

Even before Kennedy took his oath of office, Khrushchev delivered his January 6 teeth-clenching speech on wars of national liberation. In it, he declared that the time had about arrived to conclude a peace treaty and settle the



Berlin question. He returned to this theme a month later in his February 17 note to Chancellor Adenauer. The West, he complained, was always seeking excuses to avoid the issue. If it were not American elections, it was German. (German elections were scheduled for September.) If it were not elections, it was the need for a period of quiet while a new administration settled in. This could not go on. In March, US Ambassador Llewellyn Thompson pursued Khrushchev to Siberia to give him a letter from the President, in which Kennedy proposed that he and the Soviet leader meet and talk things over. This letter and the Bay of Pigs diverted Khrushchev from Berlin for a few months, but in May he returned to the attack when the Warsaw Pact issued a statement, backing Khrushchev's demands for a peace treaty and a "free demilitarized West Berlin."

While it may have seemed unnecessary to the West for Khrushchev to renew the Berlin crisis, it should be remembered that he had been deeply committed since November, 1958 to the signature of a peace treaty and the creation of a "free city" in West Berlin. Not to have renewed the crisis, which he postponed after the abortive summit meeting in 1960 on the grounds it was impossible to do business with Eisenhower, would have been an admission of defeat on a major aspect of his foreign policy. Mao Tse Tung was also becoming increasingly obstreperous, and Khrushchev may have felt obliged to prove that he had not turned soft. In addition, in his contest with the US, Khrushchev was perpetrating a gigantic bluff over his missile arsenal. The Americans had begun to suspect early in 1961 that their estimates on Soviet missile strength were exaggerated.

Although Defense Under Secretary Gilpatric did not confirm this until late in the year, Khrushchev may have realized that it was only a question of time until he was found out.

Khrushchev outlined his policy in a speech early in the year. Although he wanted to avoid nuclear war, he promised to continue the struggle with the capitalists by other means. While exploiting any advantages in the developed world, he would assist the struggles against imperialism in the former colonial areas. Behind this verbiage lay a specific program. Mao was launching on a dangerous course in southeast Asia and Khrushchev wanted no part of it. He decided, therefore, to extricate himself from Laos. At the same time, he pushed Soviet activities in Africa, partly to compete with the Chinese. To provide a bargaining counter in dealing with Kennedy, Khrushchev increased Soviet assistance to Cuba. His main blow, however, was directed against the target on which he set his sights in 1958--Berlin. He calculated that success there would radiate out like a tidal wave, shaking Kennedy's position in Germany, NATO, and around the world.

While, therefore, Khrushchev arrived in Vienna with some flexibility on details and timing, he was firmly committed to make a fuss over Berlin.

Although Kennedy had held out an olive branch to Khrushchev, he had made up his mind on Berlin before entering the White House. In July, 1960, he said, "We should make it very clear that we are not going to concede our position on Berlin . . ." After Khrushchev sent his February 17 note to Adenauer, Kennedy ordered a review of Berlin policy. Ambassador-at-Large Harriman gave the first hint of its results in a speech in Berlin in March. He said that any talks with the Soviets would start from scratch. The State Department subsequently explained that this meant the withdrawal of the final proposals made by the Allies at Geneva in 1959. Although the text of these proposals were never published, they were summarized by Secretary Herter in a statement to the Ministerial Conference on August 5. While these preserved the essentials of the Allied position, including the Allied presence in Berlin and rights of access, they also dangled several concessions, which Kennedy only wanted to renew if he were getting something for them.

Prior to a visit by British Prime Minister Macmillan to Washington in April, 1961, Kennedy asked Dean Acheson to take a look at Berlin. During his talk with Macmillan,

Kennedy asked Acheson to outline his views. While these have yet to be published in any detail, they clearly did not call for tolerating any Soviet interference with access.

In May, Secretary Rusk reaffirmed the Truman and Eisenhower commitments to Berlin in his address to the NATO meeting in Oslo. In their communique, the Ministers "reiterated their determination. . .to maintain the freedom of West Berlin and its people."

Kennedy, therefore, arrived in Vienna committed to defend Berlin, but with some flexibility regarding access arrangements and cold war activities in West Berlin. If he had any idea of playing these cards, however, the opportunity did not arise. As Kennedy walked in the door, Khrushchev hit him with a large bucket of cold water.

## 2. Confrontation in Vienna

Although he may have been bargaining, Khrushchev's presentation was brutal. No other word adequately describes his performance. He made it clear from the outset that he still wanted the Allies out of Berlin. The first step in this direction would be the signature of a peace treaty with both Germanies. If the West balked, the Soviets would sign a separate treaty with the East German regime. West

Berlin would then become a "demilitarized free city." If the West wished, token Allied troops or neutral troops under UN aegis could remain--with a slight catch. If Allied troops were left in the city, they would include Soviet contingents. If neutral troops took over, they would presumably include some friendly to the Soviets. This proposal was referred to by Kennedy as, "What's mine is mine. What's yours is negotiable." Khrushchev offered to postpone the treaty for six months, while the East and West Germans tried to get together. This would, however, have given Khrushchev his immediate tactical aim in Germany, acceptance of the Ulbricht regime, which was unacceptable to the Allies.

In several long conversations, Kennedy tried to shake his opponent's determination. He stressed that Khrushchev was challenging one of America's vital interests. It could not possibly give way, even if this meant risking war. Finally, he saw that Khrushchev would not budge an inch. At the end of the discussion, he summarized the prospect very graphically. "It will be a cold winter."

There has been some debate regarding the effect of Khrushchev's presentation on Kennedy. New York Times columnist James Reston saw him shortly after he emerged from the conference room. Reston has described him as

"shaken and angry." Theodore Sorensen maintains that this was an exaggeration. Be that as it may, the nation saw on its television screens after his return a man who had been deeply impressed. The President spoke of "a very somber two days." Nor would it be surprising if Kennedy felt drained after his talks. He had gone to Vienna hopeful that he could avoid a crisis. By the time Khrushchev had let him out of the ring, this hope had been swept down the Danube. Then, to be sure there was no misunderstanding, Khrushchev handed Kennedy an aide memoire, just before he left Vienna, which reiterated the Soviet position in unambiguous terms.

### 3. The Aftermath of Vienna

As soon as Kennedy returned to Washington, he plunged into the Berlin problem. While there had been considerable Allied planning after 1958, this was addressed mostly to the problem of access. Kennedy asked that a larger canvas be used. To do this, he called on Dean Acheson again.

While Acheson toiled in his offices on the seventh floor of the State Department, Washington plunged into an intense--and confused--debate. Senator Mansfield suggested that all of Berlin be made a free city under international control. After talking with Khrushchev, Walter Lippman suggested the US say, "We don't like Berlin the way it is."

We want to improve it, and if you can negotiate with us an improvement, we'll be very interested." The New York Times insisted, "The first and most immediate response of the free world must be a military strengthening of NATO. . . ." Richard Nixon maintained that Berlin was not a bone in Khrushchev's throat. It was "actually the morsel he would bite off in order to chew at the vitals of the West." Marquis Childs explained that, with thirty different contingency plans before him, President Kennedy was still in the sorting stage. The Washington Post's Chalmers Roberts reported the general belief in Washington that nothing was negotiable but that negotiations were inevitable later in the year. After meeting with the President, Secretary McNamara told reporters, "We have no plans for increasing our forces in Europe, but I don't say we won't." Newsweek published what purported to be the views of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. In the next issue, the magazine reported that Kennedy had ordered the FBI to investigate the leak in the Pentagon. Kennedy told a press conference, "There is peace in Germany and Berlin. If it is disturbed, it will be a direct Soviet responsibility." Rusk declared in a TV interview that the US would stand by Berlin but would explore all possibilities for a "tolerable peace."

The first round of debate ended on June 29, when the President called a meeting of the National Security Council to consider Acheson's report. This focused on the problem of the Allied response, should the Soviets carry out their threat to sign a treaty. Acheson recommended that the US respond vigorously to any challenge to Allied access. In order to back his hand, Acheson recommended that the President take major military preparedness measures. After the discussion, Kennedy was still not satisfied that he had all the information he needed. He turned to his Secretaries of State and Defense and asked them to prepare their recommendations. Meanwhile, he asked Acheson to study the other part of the equation-- negotiations.

Under the direction of Rusk and McNamara, the State-Defense study was undertaken by an experienced team of officers. European Assistant Secretary Foy Kohler headed the State contingent. His right-hand man was Martin Hillenbrand, who had served in Berlin before heading the German desk since 1958. The desk was augmented by a number of Berlin hands. Assistant Secretary Paul Nitze headed the Defense contingent.

This group plunged into three weeks of frenzied activity, during which they prepared two basic reports. They worked far into the night and often around the clock to meet their deadlines. There was, however, a certain amount of discord.



This was partly due to policy differences, but it was also caused by the fact that many of the people involved in State and Defense were getting acquainted under intense pressure.

Contrary to the impression given by the press, Kennedy was not always dissatisfied with the bureaucracy's work on Berlin. Much has been made of the July 17 Allied reply to Khrushchev's June 4 aide memoire. Kennedy thought it so legalistic--which, along with much diplomatic correspondence, it was--that he made his own reply in a statement to the press. He also felt the note had an intolerably long gestation period--43 days. While the State Department was by no means responsible for all the delay, this was too long, and thereafter notes on Berlin were prepared with more dispatch. To give credit where it is due, however, Kennedy commended in writing the officers who prepared the key State-Defense study during that hectic July.

While the Berlin team scrambled, the **public debate** continued. Lippman urged the President to take a positive line, which took into account the division of Germany. Two days after he retired, Air Force Chief of Staff Thomas D. White warned that there was a fair chance of war. Isaac Deutscher linked the Berlin crisis to the Sino-Soviet quarrel. NATO's General Lauris Norstad warned against reliance on the threat of nuclear retaliation.

The West, he said, must be able to bridge the gap between nothing and nuclear war. Following an announcement of an increase in the Soviet military budget, McNamara forecast a review of American military strength. Eisenhower urged that the US stand firm on Berlin. In a spirited discussion at a Washington party, Soviet Ambassador Menshikov predicted that "when the chips are down, the American people won't fight for Berlin." The London Daily Telegraph called for an end to Kennedy's interminable reviews and task force reports and a beginning of sober joint western planning.

While Washington was in the throes of making a decision, Khrushchev and Ulbricht continued to beat the drums. In a series of speeches, Khrushchev repeated his demands--and added a specific deadline, December 31. On June 15, Ulbricht spelled out what he meant by a "demilitarized free city." He would close the radio stations beamed to East Germany, the refugee reception centers, and the "agent" centers. He would control all traffic to West Berlin, whether by surface or air. He would end the application of West German laws to Berlin. Yet, he would do all this without changing the life of the West Berliners!

Kennedy and Rusk replied in a series of statements, which sought to place on Khrushchev responsibility for the drama about to unfold.

The debate on US policy ended on July 25, when the President spoke to the nation and the world. Placing Berlin in the world context, he noted that the nation also faced a challenge in Southeast Asia and the western hemisphere. West Berlin, however, had now become "the great testing place of western courage and will, a focal point where our solemn commitments . . . and Soviet ambition now meet in basic confrontation." "Today the endangered frontier of freedom runs through divided Berlin." Kennedy went on to outline to the nation the measures it would take to meet the challenge, for--while rejecting pressures to declare a national emergency--he had decided on a series of major steps recommended in the State-Defense studies. The regular forces would be increased through larger draft calls and extensions of terms of service. Selected reserve units and individuals would be called up. Ships and planes headed for the scrap heap would be retained. Others would be removed from moth balls. The President also called for a new start on a civil defense program. In order to meet the costs, he asked Congress for \$3.5 billion.

At the same time, Kennedy declared that, as it was girding itself for trouble, the United States would continue to pursue the path of reason. To this end, he offered to remove "any actual irritants in West Berlin."

He also expressed willingness to submit our rights in Berlin to international adjudication. If anyone doubted the desires of the Berliners, this could be submitted to a free vote.

Kennedy ended his talk with a personal word about his main preoccupation, the terrible catastrophe of nuclear war. "Now, in the nuclear age, any misjudgment on either side about the intentions of the other could rain more devastation in several hours than has been wrought by all wars of human history." This specter continued to haunt him throughout the weeks and months ahead and weighed heavily in every decision he made.

While Congress and the nation supported the President's summons wholeheartedly, his reference to "irritants" caused some uneasiness in Foggy Bottom and alarm in Germany. The main concern was that he might sacrifice RIAS, the American-run radio station in West Berlin which had become a symbol of the city's freedom. Kennedy never defined, however, what he meant, and the issue gradually faded into the background. A more lasting mark was made by the call-up of the reserves. This was handled in such a way as to leave a bad taste, which is still a factor in discussions of calling reserves. The most notorious misfire was the civil defense program. While some useful work was done, it caused a great deal of confusion. This experience makes it more difficult even today to get an adequate civil

defense, even though it might save tens of millions of lives. Perhaps most important, Kennedy may have made a mistake in giving the impression he was drawing the line firmly through Berlin. Khrushchev may have gotten the impression that Kennedy was ready to write East Berlin off completely. Events proved this not to be the case. Although Kennedy was prepared to take greater risks for the West Berliners, he recognized that the Allies had rights in all of Berlin which they should try to preserve.

#### 4. Consultations with the Allies

While the debate went on in America during June and July, a parallel discussion went on across the Atlantic, which confronted the Soviets with anything but a united front. In London, the British were indignant about charges of softness in the American press. Foreign Secretary Home laid out three principles for negotiations: the right of the Berliners to choose their own way of life; the right of the western allies to be in the city; and the rights of guaranteed access. The New York Times reported that the British government was worried over public apathy. The paper also reported that the British felt that negotiations would be required to avoid a crisis, and that negotiations would involve concessions. The Washington Post reported that the French were opposed to "sabre rattling." They stressed DeGaulle's strong stand on Berlin but cautioned

against intensive military preparations. DeGaulle warned Khrushchev against "offstage thunder." French observers also warned the western allies against getting trapped in negotiations. The German Parliament on the other hand called for negotiations on the German problem. Berlin Mayor Willy Brandt--socialist candidate for Chancellor--proposed a western peace conference on Germany. Adenauer denounced the proposal.

Kennedy reminded a press conference, "Napoleon once said that he won all his successes because he fought without allies." The President added, "If this alliance is going to move in concert, in my opinion we have to improve our consultation" and "come to decisions more quickly."

Kennedy approached the crisis with a good idea of the attitudes of his major allies. He had talked with Adenauer in April, during the Chancellor's visit to Washington and found Adenauer opposed to giving an inch. Kennedy talked with DeGaulle in Paris on his way to Vienna. DeGaulle urged that the Allies simply huddle together until the storm had passed. Macmillan on the other hand recognized that the Allies should be ready to barricade the door but urged that it be kept ajar for negotiations.

Several days before Kennedy's July 25 speech, the State Department gave the British, French, and German Embassies a summary of the final State-Defense study. While Kennedy did not go into detail on what this study

contained in his speech, he outlined his general program for the alliance. "A first need is to hasten progress toward the military goals which the North Atlantic Allies have set for themselves. We will put even greater resources into fulfilling these goals, and we look to our allies to do the same." Kennedy did not have to explain. Early in his administration, he had begun to push for an increase in NATO's non-nuclear forces. For the most part, the Europeans declined--politely but firmly. This was mainly because they did not want to spend more. They had, however, also interpreted Kennedy's call for more conventional arms as a portent of an American reluctance to use nuclear weapons to defend Europe. They were, therefore, concerned lest Khrushchev come to the conclusion that he could run greater risks.

The debate over the use of force by NATO in connection with Berlin--at the center of which was the question of the use of nuclear weapons--went on until the Cuban missile crisis. While Kennedy was prepared to risk war over Berlin, he thought that Khrushchev would act in such a way as to minimize his risks. He insisted, therefore, that NATO should have a full range of options, from a small probe to nuclear war. The Allies reluctantly agreed to plan on this basis but insisted that the point at which nuclear weapons would be used be left undefined.

Shortly after the July 25 speech, a team of US experts crossed the Atlantic to Paris. Foy Kohler headed the group, which also included his deputy Martin Hillenbrand and Frank Cash, as well as Paul Nitze from Defense and the Joint Chiefs' representative Major General David Gray. Henry Fowler, Under Secretary of the Treasury, joined the group, to handle economic counter-measures. With the collaboration of their British, French, and German colleagues, this group did a remarkable job of preparing recommendations for the Foreign Ministers.

The results of Rusk's meetings with his three colleagues on August 4-5 were, however, mixed. Rusk, British Foreign Minister Home, and French Foreign Minister Couve de Murville informed their German colleague, von Brentano, that the Germans would be invited to join the Washington Ambassadorial Group. The Ministers then ran into a snag over negotiations. Rusk and Home insisted that Khrushchev should be provided with an alternative to signing a peace treaty. Couve de Murville insisted that there was nothing to talk about. All Khrushchev had to do was leave Berlin alone, and there would be no crisis. The Ministers left Paris, therefore, with no agreement on a move to counter Khrushchev's threat to sign a treaty by the end of the year.

In the Kremlin, meanwhile, Khrushchev and Ulbricht were working out a move to which none of this Allied planning and debate applied.



## CHAPTER 2. THE WALL

While Berlin was in the center of the stage as 1961 entered its second half, other events were waiting to make their entrance. On August 1, Congress passed a joint resolution, authorizing Kennedy to call 250 thousand reserves to the colors. Five days later, a Soviet rocket hurled Cosmonaut Titov into space for 17 orbits. Elated, Khrushchev welcomed the space traveler to Moscow and--lest anyone fail to get the point--announced that Soviet scientists were capable of developing a 100 megaton super bomb. In view of the worsening atmosphere, Kennedy decided to give up temporarily his efforts to improve relations with Khrushchev, and on August 21 the United States terminated its civil aviation negotiations with the Soviet Union. On the last day of the month, Khrushchev announced that he would resume nuclear testing in the atmosphere.

This thunderclap resounded in Belgrade, where 25 neutralist leaders--including Nehru, Tito, Sukarno, and Nasser--gathered on the first day of September. Four days later, Kennedy announced the resumption of underground testing. The neutralist leaders called on the Soviet Union and America to "suspend their war preparations. . .and take steps toward negotiations. . ."

Khrushchev declined to stop testing. Kennedy refused to hold any more conferences with Khrushchev "until they could serve a useful purpose." In the middle of the month, two West German planes accidentally strayed over East Germany. They landed in West Berlin with Soviet fighters desperately trying to locate and destroy them. This commentary on Soviet air defenses reverberated all the way back to Moscow. The Soviet leaders, chagrined, refused to believe that it was not a deliberate provocation.

Early in October, Kennedy urged Americans to build fall-out shelters in their homes. Newspapers reminded their readers that the Berlin crisis was not the only product of Vienna. The neutralist leader Souvanna Phouma became Premier of Laos, an important step toward the fulfillment of Kennedy and Khrushchev's agreement to neutralize that sleepy kingdom. While conditions in Laos seemed promising, those in South Viet Nam were causing deepening concern. In mid-October, Kennedy despatched his Special Military Adviser, General Maxwell Taylor, to Saigon. His mission was to determine the best way to help the regime

of Ngo Dinh Diem deal with the growing insurgency of the Viet Cong. Ten days of rioting began in the Dominican Republic on October 16. A few days later, Deputy Defense Secretary Roswell Gilpatric spoke to the Business Council in Hot Springs, Virginia. When he had finished, the myth of the "missile gap" had been publicly destroyed. Khrushchev replied at the end of October, by exploding a 50 megaton bomb.

This was the arena in which the second act of Kennedy and Khrushchev's struggle over Berlin was played out.

#### 1. Voting with Their Feet

The repercussions of Vienna were felt in a deeply personal way in East Germany. Always restless under the Soviet yoke, Ulbricht's wards became even more desperate. People began to talk again in undertones about rebellion. By early July, even the regime organ NEW GERMANY was reflecting tiny rays of unrest. Rolf Weike, Party First Secretary in Karl Marx Province, accused "leading comrades" in his area of interfering with supplies to consumers. Herman Matern, a member of the Politburo--taking account of the discontent--called for "open discussions among party members and with the people."

Observing these and other portents, the American Ambassador in Bonn, Walter Dowling, asked Washington in early

July what it proposed to do if there were an uprising. After struggling with this question for several weeks, officials in the State Department decided that such an important decision could not be taken in advance. Besides, they assumed that the lessons of the 1953 and Hungarian uprisings had not been lost on the East Germans.

Washington was, at this time, becoming increasingly concerned about the growing flood of refugees into West Berlin. After Vienna, many East Germans again were gripped by the fear that the door was about to be closed. Many who had hesitated to abandon their homes and loved ones before now decided that they had better make their escape while they could. Although the border with West Germany was sealed, they could travel by train or bus to East Berlin. From there, they easily skipped into West Berlin on foot, by streetcar, or subway, for the controls at the sector boundary were perfunctory.

Many friends, relatives, and neighbors had preceded them since World War II--an estimated  $3\frac{1}{2}$  to 4 million. This was over a fifth of the East German population, including some of its most skilled workers, managers, and intellectuals, as well as many young people. The stream reached flood tide in 1953, the year of the East German

uprising, when 350,000 left. Another peak was reached in 1956, in the wake of the Hungarian uprising, when East Germans again feared the door would be closed. The flow gradually diminished until 1960, when it began to increase again.

After Vienna, the East Germans panicked. During July, there were over 30,000--the greatest number since 1953. During the first part of August, the refugee officials in West Berlin were at their wits end. Although extra camps were opened, all reception centers were filled to capacity. These centers processed the refugees as quickly as possible and sent to West Germany those wishing to go, which was most of them. Since the East Germans controlled travel by Germans on road and rail, the refugees went by air. All flights of the regular civil airlines--Pan Am, BEA, and Air France--left Berlin packed. Allied officials speculated on whether a military airlift would be necessary, but additional civil aircraft were thrown into the breach. This drama became front page material, as the world watched a regime bleeding to death.

By mid-July, Washington was asking itself what action Ulbricht might take to stop this hemorrhage. The State Department cautioned the American Embassy in Bonn and

Mission in Berlin that, if the refugee flood continued, Ulbricht might take drastic steps to control it. State suggested that Ulbricht could try to control movement from East Germany to East Berlin or he could severely restrict travel from East to West Berlin.

This specter caused great concern. Many American officials looked on East Germany as a gigantic pressure cooker. West Berlin was the safety valve. If it were sealed, they feared there would be an explosion.

If this worried Washington, just imagine Ulbricht's anxiety! He was sitting right on top of the pressure cooker. He moved, therefore, with great circumspection. While Ulbricht made it clear that the "demilitarized free city" of West Berlin would be an island in a red sea, Khrushchev's scenario provided for this to come after a peace treaty. On June 15, a correspondent of the Frankfurter Rundschau asked Ulbricht, "Mr. Chairman, does the setting up of a free city in your view imply that the state frontier will be at the Brandenburg Gate, and are you determined to treat it consistently as such with all its consequences?" Ulbricht replied, "Nobody intends to put up a wall."

By early July, Ulbricht had decided to begin moving.

On July 6, he opened a campaign against East Berliners--an estimated 60,000--working in West Berlin. Most of them commuted because they had the best of both worlds, good jobs and a free market in West Berlin and low rent and other subsidies in East Berlin. During July, Ulbricht gradually tightened the screws, making it less and less advantageous. On July 23, the New York Times reported that rumors were circulating in East Germany that the escape hatch was about to close. Three days later, Ulbricht demanded that "all means" be taken to halt the refugee exodus. On August 3, after conferring with Mayor Willy Brandt, the Allied Commandants protested the restrictions on East Berliners working in West Berlin. By that time, however, Khrushchev and Ulbricht were conferring in Moscow, plotting their next--and boldest--stroke.

## 2. The Division of Berlin

The victorious Allied powers in World War II clearly intended Berlin to be dealt with as a whole. This is evident in the wartime agreements on Germany and Berlin. The war was no sooner over, however, than the arrangements began to fall apart. Berlin was divided politically in 1947, when the Soviets established a separate regime in the eastern half of the city. When the Soviets later

established the German Democratic Republic, Ulbricht made East Berlin the capital. He maintained, however, the legal fiction that East Berlin was separate, by applying legislation there separately. The Soviets also maintained a Commandant in East Berlin, with whom the Allied Commandants dealt. Nevertheless, by 1961 East Berlin was a completely different world from West Berlin.

Ulbricht began controlling movement between East and West Berlin in 1951. Over the years, the number of crossing points were progressively reduced. While these still permitted a great deal of movement back and forth--an estimated half million a day--he had established the principle that he controlled the number of crossing points. During 1960, Ulbricht introduced new controls regarding travel by West Germans and West Berliners to East Berlin but eased off when Adenauer threatened to suspend inter-zonal trade. The issue subsided until after the Vienna conference.

Washington knew that something was afoot when Ulbricht flew to Moscow in early August 1961. The Warsaw Pact met from August 3-5, at about the same time as the western allies were meeting in Paris. Those officials who had time to speculate assumed that Khrushchev was laying plans



for his long-heralded peace conference. He had given the Allies until the end of the year to decide, but with the pace of events no one took that at face value. The issuance of a non-committal communique at the end of the Moscow meeting was ominous.

During the week of August 6, the war clouds accumulated rapidly. The NATO Foreign Ministers concluded their meeting in Paris and reaffirmed their determination to maintain the freedom of west Berlin. On Wednesday, August 9, Khrushchev boasted of his superbomb. He added that the Soviet Union did not want war but if there were one "all Germany will be reduced to dust." British Foreign Secretary Home warned the British people of a possible war over Berlin. He explained that the word "negotiation" was not a magic formula, which would make dangers go away. On Thursday, August 10, Kennedy admitted the seriousness of the situation and expressed the hope that the Berlin question could be settled with negotiations. Khrushchev called Marshall Ivan S. Konev out of retirement to command the Soviet forces in East Germany. On Friday, August 11, after a trip around the United States Washington Post correspondent Chalmers Roberts reported that the American people were in an ugly mood.

The same day, Ulbricht stressed the need for border defenses against western militarists. His People's Chamber instructed the Council of Ministers to take all necessary measures on the basis of the decisions of the Warsaw Pact.

On Saturday, August 12, Khrushchev and Ulbricht drew two more cards. The East German Council of Ministers adopted a decree making the line through Berlin a state boundary. East Germans and East Berliners could cross only with special permission. West Berliners could visit East Berlin only on West Berlin identity cards, that is not on West German passports. The Minister of the Interior, Karl Maron, issued a decree, which designated 13 crossing points. The decree concluded by saying, euphemistically, "Citizens of the German Democratic Republic who do not work in Berlin are asked to refrain from travelling to Berlin until further notice." These two decrees were, however, not published that day.

Meanwhile, Marshall Konev had flung an armed ring around Berlin. Soviet and East German forces were placed on alert.

Shortly after midnight, on Sunday, August 13, the subways stopped at the sector boundary. Police told the passengers to get off. They could not cross the line.

Police also halted all vehicles and streetcars. Soon people on foot or on bicycles were caught in the net. Guards began stringing barbed wire. Others placed obstacles in the roads. Gradually, movement across the boundary ground to a halt.

In the morning, Berliners awoke to find their city divided--with both incongruous and tragic results. A man who had gone to East Berlin for a party and stayed the night found himself trapped. Another, who had gone to East Berlin to visit his mother, was separated from his wife and children. Men and women who had worked in the other half of the city were suddenly unemployed. Moreover, thousands of East Germans who had waited one day too long were trapped in Ulbricht's concentration camp.

On Sunday, August 13--after the city had been divided--Ulbricht showed his hand, by publishing the decrees adopted the previous day as well as the Declaration adopted by the Warsaw Pact at its meeting in Moscow earlier in the month. The Declaration complained that the Federal Republic had induced "certain unstable elements in the G.D.R. (German Democratic Republic) to leave for West Germany." It also observed that "subversive activities directed from West Berlin have greatly increased of late. . . ." Therefore,

"The Governments of the Warsaw Pact member states (call on the G.D.R.) to establish. . .effective control. . . around the whole territory of West Berlin. . ." In order to reassure the Allies, the declaration added "that these measures must not affect existing provisions for traffic and control on communication routes between West Berlin and West Germany." In order to make it clear that they were not completely without feeling, the authors added, "The governments of the Warsaw Pact member states understand, of course, that (these measures) somewhat inconvenience the population."

Thus, on August 13, Ulbricht reduced the number of crossing points between East and West Berlin to 13, and soon closed the one at the Brandenburg gate. With rare exceptions, he forbade East Berliners and East Germans to travel to West Berlin. West Berliners and West Germans were, however, still allowed to visit East Berlin, as could Allied civilian and military personnel and other foreigners. For six days, Ulbricht watched the reactions and strengthened his fence. He began construction of the wall on August 19. Four days later, he reduced the number of crossing points from 12 to seven. Allied personnel and other foreigners were limited to the crossing point at Friedrichstrasse, which later became known as Checkpoint

Charlie. West Germans could use two crossing points and West Berliners four.

Ulbricht threw in a hooker for West Berliners. They would have to apply for permits at one of two branches of an official travel bureau Ulbricht proposed to establish in West Berlin. Mayor Willy Brandt--understandably suspicious of Ulbricht's motives--decided he could not allow the East German regime to establish a presence in West Berlin. He requested the Allied Commandants for assistance. On August 25 they issued a decree banning the establishment in West Berlin "of offices purporting to issue permits for entry into the Soviet Sector of Berlin. . ." With this decree, movement by West Berliners--but not West Germans--into East Berlin stopped. (It only began again at Christmas time in 1964, when Brandt worked out an arrangement for the East Germans to issue passes in West Berlin.)

Berlin was divided. By and large, only Soviet and Allied personnel were able to move about the city. And their turn was soon to come.

### 3. The Allied Response

Khrushchev and Ulbricht achieved complete tactical surprise. August 13 found Berlin Mayor Willy Brandt in West Germany electioneering. Kennedy was spending the

weekend at Hyannis Port. Macmillan was in Scotland, and Foreign Secretary Home was off shooting grouse. DeGaulle was on vacation, and French officialdom--as any August--was sleeping in the sun. Khrushchev himself was on holiday on the Black Sea. The only two leaders at their posts were Adenauer--and Ulbricht.

In retrospect, it may seem somewhat difficult to understand why the west was taken by surprise. Certainly everyone knew about the refugees. Many observers had speculated on what Ulbricht would do to stanch the flow. The State Department had advised the Embassy in Bonn and the Mission in Berlin in mid-July that Ulbricht might take drastic steps. Even before that, Ulbricht had spoken in a press conference of a "wall"--although denying that he intended to build one. Why, then, the surprise?

After Khrushchev's ultimatum in 1958, the Allies constructed a paper model of the Berlin problem. Its foundation was that the Soviets would launch the crisis by signing a peace treaty. The East Germans would then attempt to replace the Soviets at the autobahn and rail checkpoints and in the Berlin Air Safety Center. If the Allies resisted, the crisis would intensify. If the Allies accepted the East Germans, they would only have postponed the evil day until the East Germans tried to apply unacceptable procedures.

This propensity was reinforced by other factors. During early August, Secretary Rusk and a number of officials concerned with Berlin were in Paris planning against the peace treaty scenario. President Kennedy and other senior officials in Washington were preoccupied with the possibility of an East German uprising. As for the failure to notice Ulbricht's reference to a "wall," this is easily explained. Officials were drowned at the time by words. Ulbricht's statement was lost in the background noise.

This recreation of the atmosphere in August helps to explain the reaction. When word was received from Berlin that the city had been divided, there was little inclination to take any precipitate action. After conferring with his staff and with Kennedy by telephone, Secretary Rusk issued a statement at about noon which said, "Available information indicates that measures taken thus far are aimed at residents of East Berlin and East Germany and not at the Allied position in West Berlin or access thereto." "These violations of existing agreements will be the subject of vigorous protest through appropriate channels." There was no reference to any possible US or Allied action.

From that point, the situation went steadily downhill. After struggling with their capitals for two days, the Allied Commandants in Berlin sent a letter of protest to the Soviet Commandant in East Berlin. When Brandt referred to this gesture the next day in a talk to a crowd gathered in front of the City Hall, it jeered. Berlin morale was not helped any by Adenauer's

receiving that same day the Soviet Ambassador Smirnov, who bore a reassuring message from Khrushchev. Adenauer also cautioned the East Germans "not to do anything that could only worsen the situation. . ." Four days after August 13, the Allied governments protested in Moscow. Given the problems of inter-governmental coordination, this was a backbreaking performance--but it was still too slow. The Berliners also soon noted that US soldiers, under orders from higher headquarters, were not patrolling the sector border.

As the week wore on, it became increasingly evident that August 13 had been a trauma for the Berliners. Early in the week, one senior official in Washington remarked, "I certainly hope this does not get in the way of our planning for the crisis. By mid-week, he saw that something had to be done. But what? The official position before August 13 was that the Allies would counter the division of the city with restrictions on travel by East Germans to NATO countries. Consideration would also be given to restrictions on trade. While the Allies agree on the travel restrictions, it took time to work out the detail. Restrictions on trade would have been just as painful for the Allies as the East Germans and were never agreed to.

In mid-week Edward R. Murrow, Director of the US Information Agency, cabled from Berlin that morale was going to pot. On Thursday, August 17, Kennedy called a



meeting at the White House to consider a letter from Mayor Brandt. After a lengthy and heated discussion, he decided to approve Brandt's request to send a high-level official to Berlin. Kennedy selected Vice President Johnson. In response to Brandt's request to name General Lucius Clay--hero of the Berlin airlift--Commandant, Kennedy asked Clay to accompany Johnson.

On Friday, August 18, Kennedy met with Johnson and Clay. On Clay's urging, Kennedy directed Defense Secretary McNamara to reinforce the Berlin garrison. As a result, the First Battle Group of the Eighteenth Infantry Regiment (about 1,500 men) found itself the following day racing toward Helmstedt, at the western end of the Autobahn.

Johnson and Clay departed for Germany Friday night and arrived in Bonn Saturday morning. After assuaging Adenauer's feelings--he had been told he could not accompany Johnson--they pushed on to Berlin. In his speeches, Johnson pulled out all the stops. Drawing on the Declaration of Independence he pledged American "lives, fortunes, and sacred honor." The Berliners went wild with enthusiasm. Their beleaguered city had not been forgotten.

On Saturday, August 19,--with Johnson in Germany and the battle group on its way to Helmstedt--the Berlin Task Force addressed the question of the Soviet reaction.

Although the Director, Foy Kohler, and Ambassador-at-Large Bohlen had calculated that the Soviets would not hinder the convoy, this could not be counted on. The Joint Chief's prepared and the President approved, therefore, contingency instructions.

After a race across Germany, the convoy arrived at the Soviet checkpoint shortly after dawn on Sunday. A Soviet officer had some difficulty counting the soldiers in their trucks. Since the men were tired and his orders were to get to Berlin, Colonel Glover Johns ordered them to dismount to be counted. While this was contrary to Allied practice, it did expedite the processing. Soon the convoy was on its way across East Germany and arrived in Berlin in the early afternoon--where it was met by Johnson, Brandt, and Clay.

Once again, the Berliners were overjoyed. There were scenes reminiscent of the liberation of Paris. In Washington where the White House was in direct contact with the convoy--there was a great sigh of relief. The Soviets had not tried to stop the battle group, and Col. Johns had not had to execute his contingency orders.

! Practically no one noticed that the convoy had dismounted to be counted--a precedent which led to a serious confrontation on the autobahn two years later.

#### 4. Doing Business on the Potomac

By the time of the Johnson visit to Berlin, the Organization which was to manage the Berlin crisis had begun to take shape. Following Vienna, Washington was both preparing for a crisis and getting itself organized at the same time. Kennedy took personal charge, immersing himself in even the finest details, for he was determined not to have another Bay of Pigs. Although Dean Acheson played an important role in the initial phase of the crisis, he gradually faded from the scene. Secretaries Rusk and McNamara took a direct interest from the outset, but were by no means able to devote full time. After a diffused scrimmage within State, European Assistant Secretary Foy Kohler emerged as quarterback. McNamara asked Paul Nitze to represent him on military questions. The Joint Chiefs named Major General David Gray as their representative.

During June and July, Kohler and Nitze and their subordinates operated under a loose arrangement known as the Interdepartmental Coordinating Committee on Germany and Berlin. The two studies requested by Kennedy were issued under the auspices of this committee. Nevertheless, it met very infrequently, and coordination took place under the aegis of the German desk in State, which was headed by Martin Hillenbrand, with members of the staff assigned

responsibility for liaison with the various agencies.

Kennedy was by no means satisfied with this arrangement and kept urging that a task force be formed. There was also pressure from the Pentagon for more formalized arrangements--which really meant regular meetings. Within State, there were divided councils. Officers in the newly established Political-Military Office under Deputy Under Secretary U. Alexis Johnson favored a task force. Some officers on the German desk were unenthusiastic, fearing that they would "lose control of the problem"--particularly to the Pentagon. Actually, it was questionable at that point whether anyone was fully in control.

Under Kennedy's prodding, Rusk and McNamara agreed in late July to establish a task force. Kohler and Nitze, on the eve of their departure for Paris, agreed to establish a staff nucleus, consisting of officers from State, Nitze's office, and the Joint Staff. This group moved into the State Operations' Center, where they were ensconced in early August. Immediately after August 13, the Coordinating Committee evolved into the Berlin Task Force and started holding daily meetings. These gatherings provided a forum for keeping all concerned informed and an opportunity for the more strong-minded individuals to blow off steam. Much of the work was done in smaller working

groups. Unless it was particularly sensitive, however, any paper or instruction was reviewed in plenary meetings. Since feelings often ran so high that you could have cut the tension with a knife, only as strong a person as Foy Kohler could have held these meetings together.

As time passed and people got better acquainted, the process gradually smoothed out, and the task force did a great deal of valuable work together. Kohler and Nitze also worked very closely with Rusk and McNamara. Whenever key decisions were needed, they all went over to the White House for meetings with Kennedy. These meetings were also attended by McGeorge Bundy, General Maxwell Taylor, and Martin Hillenbrand.

This only represents one dimension of the effort--coordination of the White House, Foggy Bottom, and the Pentagon. Another dimension was represented by the Ambassadorial Group, which was also chaired by Foy Kohler and included the British, French, and German Ambassadors. During this period, these men met almost every afternoon. As questions became more detailed than they were able to deal with, they set up sub-groups--ultimately six in all. Kennedy and Adenauer (and probably DeGaulle and Macmillan) were never very happy about the work of the Ambassadorial Group. They may have forgotten, however, that these

Ambassadors were not free agents but worked on the basis of instructions. Their job was to reconcile often widely divergent points of view. What is remarkable is not that they accomplished less than their impatient bosses wanted but that they were able to do as much as they did. Even if they had been archangels, there were limits as to how far they could go in reconciling irreconcilable positions. This was nowhere better demonstrated than in their efforts to reach agreement on negotiations.

## CHAPTER 3. CONFLICTING APPROACHES TO DEALING WITH THE SOVIETS

The greatest source of discord in Washington and in the Allied camp during 1961 was the approach to be taken toward negotiations with the Kremlin. The debate which went on along the Potomac that summer was not characterized by clarity. It is never easy to make one's way through a labyrinth as complicated as the Berlin problem, particularly since it was intertwined with the German question and all the emotional issues which it evokes. The task was not made any easier, however, when some of the more ardent proponents of "negotiations" mistook them for an alternative to possible unpleasant decisions. To be more specific, no amount of willingness to talk could replace a readiness to take actions which might risk war in order to defend the Allied position in Berlin.

The inclination to consider negotiations and actions alternatives may have been encouraged by the fact that they were dealt with separately within the US government. Dean Acheson prepared one report devoted primarily to actions and another concerned with negotiation. Whereas many officials in Washington were concerned with planning and operations, negotiations were handled by a limited number of officers, primarily in the State Department.

In fact, negotiations in 1961 were handled almost entirely by the President, McGeorge Bundy, Secretary Rusk, Foy Kohler, and Martin Hillenbrand.

Although some of his staff not directly involved may not have understood the relationship between negotiations and actions, Kennedy clearly did. He not only listened carefully to what Khrushchev was saying--and the Soviet leader was a fountain of words during the summer of 1961--but also watched what he was doing. Kennedy also balanced his own actions, such as his military preparedness measures, with offers to talk. The July 25 speech was a case in point. While the President placed his heaviest emphasis on the military build-up, he left the door ajar for further discussions. Since, however, the stream of events was flowing rapidly and the world was awash with words, Kennedy could not be at all sure of what message Khrushchev was receiving. He decided, therefore, to open a correspondence directly with the Soviet leader. While this exchange, with the exception of some letters during the Cuban missile crisis, is yet to be published, it played an important role throughout the rest of the Kennedy administration.

Although Kennedy was in a position to settle the argument over negotiations in the American camp, he found dealing with his allies another matter. De Gaulle was



firmly opposed to negotiations on Berlin. He did not see how the West could hope to improve its position and believed, if it stood firm, the storm would pass. Adenauer gave lip service to negotiations but actually had great sympathy for De Gaulle's point of view. Macmillan, on the other hand, agreed 200 percent with Kennedy. He strongly favored talking with Khrushchev, although he was not unmindful of actions which conveyed a sense of Allied unity and--if the risks were not too great--firmness. Kennedy only gradually grasped the essentials of dealing with his allies and Khrushchev at the same time. These were that, while he could in the short run ignore De Gaulle's opposition to negotiations, he had to have Adenauer's support, even if unenthusiastic, and there was no point in getting Adenauer all upset about a proposal which was unacceptable to the Kremlin.

In addition to differing views among his Washington advisers and opposition from some of his allies, Kennedy also had to contend with his representatives in Berlin, particularly General Clay. Whereas Kennedy believed in a dialogue backed by power, Clay believed in action backed by power. Clay minimized the importance of coordination with the other Allies and maintained that, if the US led,

the Allies would (have to) follow. The events of the fall of 1961 can in fact be examined in terms of the Kennedy and Clay approaches to dealing with the Soviets.

### 1. The Kennedy Approach

The Kennedy effort to parallel the military build-up announced in his July 25 speech with discussions with the Soviets got off to a poor start in Paris, where Rusk met with his British, French, and German colleagues in early August. When the Foreign Ministers gathered, they ran up against De Gaulle's opposition to discussions with the Soviets. It soon became clear that French Foreign Minister Couve de Murvill had been given no latitude. Rather than admit to the world that they had reached an impasse, the Ministers decided to pass the problem to the Washington Ambassadorial Group. They also directed a working group to prepare a tastier version of the barely edible 1959 Peace Plan. (The 1959 plan was an elaboration of the 1954 Eden Plan and was produced for the marathon Foreign Ministers Conference which took place in Geneva.)

The events which ensued illustrate the relationship between words and actions. Shortly after Rusk returned

to Washington from Paris, Ulbricht divided Berlin. Kennedy indicated through Rusk's statement of August 13 that he would not use force to resist this, but a few days later he implicitly cautioned Khrushchev against interfering with access by sending a battle group down the Autobahn. Khrushchev countered by sending a note which contained an implied threat to air access. Kennedy promptly issued a statement warning "that any interference with free access to Berlin would be an aggressive act. . . ." August ended with Khrushchev threatening nuclear war, by announcing that he was resuming nuclear testing. To be sure that the message got across, he told two British Labor MPs that he had done this to shock the West into negotiations. Kennedy responded in early September by announcing that he had authorized the resumption of underground testing, and McNamara backed this a few days later by informing the press that he was deploying 40 thousand more troops to Europe.

With these actions, Kennedy decided that he had maneuvered himself into a position where he could talk, without anyone mistaking his willingness to parley for "softness." This left only the question of timing.

After the wall, however, the deepening atmosphere of crisis brought increasing pressures on Kennedy, particularly from the British and his own staff, to go ahead promptly. On September 13, which was one month after the division of Berlin and four days before the German elections, Kennedy informed his press conference that Rusk was ready to talk with Gromyko at the forthcoming session of the UN General Assembly. This offer had apparently been the subject of an exchange of letters between the two leaders, because Khrushchev publicly agreed the following day.

This agreement between Kennedy and Khrushchev to begin the search for an agreement on Berlin came on the eve of another meeting of the four Foreign Ministers, this time in Washington. Kennedy felt it inadvisable to wait for the outcome, since the discussions in the Ambassadorial Group had indicated that there was no prospect of getting agreement. In view of Kennedy's public commitment, the September 16 communique of the Foreign Ministers declared that "an effort should be made to ascertain if there exists a reasonable basis for negotiations with the Soviets." In other words, while he would not be a party to talks, DeGaulle acquiesced in Kennedy's making what the French President considered an ill-advised and foredoomed attempt to scout the Soviet positions.

This expedition took the form of three marathon talks between Rusk and Gromyko in New York between September 21 and 30. When the talks were over, the basic difference remained. Gromyko demanded that the Allies get out of Berlin. Rusk insisted that they intended to remain. Rusk was prepared to discuss the way in which the Allies exercised their rights of presence and access, but he was not willing to negotiate regarding the rights themselves. When Kennedy had a long talk with the Soviet Foreign Minister at the White House on October 6, he heard the same record which had been played in New York.

About this time, a cold blast from the Rhine struck Washington. Distinct signs of nervousness appeared in the German press during the New York talks between Rusk and Gromyko. General Clay did not assuage German concern when he told reporters in Berlin shortly after his arrival there as the President's Special Representative that the Germans should reconcile themselves to the division of Germany. Two days after Kennedy saw Gromyko, German Ambassador Grewe shocked Washington by telling a TV audience that the Kennedy-Gromyko talks represented a "step backward" compared with the Rusk-Gromyko talks. This nettled Kennedy, who had been impatient with a lack of German initiative, which the Germans laid to the trouble Adenauer was having forming a government after the September 17 elections. Several days after the Grewe interview,

Kennedy told his press conference that he hoped the Germans would soon be able to contribute more to western councils. The next day, Bonn returned the compliment in a press statement, which the Washington Post's Flora Lewis summarized as, "No more concessions." All in all, the fall of 1961 was not the high point of German-American relations, and more of this discord was yet to come.

Despite the furor swirling about him, Kennedy did not deviate from his purpose. He admitted that his and Rusk's talks with Gromyko "did not give us immediate hope that this matter (the problem of Germany and Berlin) would be easily settled." Rather than giving up, however, he decided to continue the dialogue but with a change of venue to Moscow, where Llewellyn Thompson was his Ambassador. Thompson had several feathers in his bonnet, including the Austrian Peace Treaty and the agreement on Trieste between Italy and Yugoslavia. Kennedy decided that now he should be given a chance with Berlin. Thompson was home on leave during the fall, and Kennedy announced that, on his return to Moscow later in the year, he would continue where Rusk had left off. In order to sooth Adenauer, the President emphasized what was involved were not negotiations but "exploratory talks."

In the interim, Kennedy instructed Rusk and Kohler to make another effort to work out an Allied agreement on a

basis for negotiations. This was followed by one of those Punch and Judy shows which makes one wonder if even friendly governments are determined to misunderstand each other. On October 13--two months had now passed since the division of Berlin--the British Foreign Office announced that there would be "official-level" talks to discuss negotiations. The French Foreign Office promptly denied that there had been any such agreement. After sorting out the confusion over the week-end, the State Department issued a statement on Monday, saying that the search for an Allied consensus would continue in the Ambassadorial Group.

Fortunately for the divided Allies, Khrushchev decided about this time to ease the pressure. In his evaluation of Gromyko's efforts in New York and Washington, Khrushchev remarked, "These left us with the impression that the Western powers were showing a certain understanding of the situation and they were disposed to seek a settlement of the German problem and the question of Berlin on a mutually acceptable basis." While this was an uncharacteristically generous account of Khrushchev's evaluation of Allied intentions, this optimism was required by his next move. He added, "If the western powers show a willingness to settle the German problem. . .we shall not. . . absolutely insist on signing the peace treaty before December 31, 1961." In other words, Khrushchev was lifting his year-end deadline.

The day after Khrushchev's speech, Rusk remarked to his press conference that this confirmed what Gromyko had said in their private talks, the single significant point to emerge from them. While this in no sense ended the crises, most American officials took the threat of a deadline with such seriousness that they welcomed this ostensible concession with a sigh of relief.

While it is not entirely clear why Khrushchev lifted his deadline, there were a number of factors working in this direction. The division of Berlin had eased the pressure on Ulbricht to stop the refugee flow. Khrushchev may also have felt that, if he did not remove the deadline after resuming nuclear testing, Kennedy might have come to the conclusion that he was headed toward war. This could have precipitated a dramatic American response, such as the mobilization of additional reserves. Since Khrushchev was already running into intense competition between the Soviet military and industry for limited resources, he would have found it even more difficult to off-set further American preparedness measures.

Whatever Khrushchev's motives, DeGaulle realized that this was only the end of the first round. To be sure there was no misunderstanding of where he stood, he wrote a letter to Kennedy on October 23, in which he stated unequivocally that he was opposed to negotiations on Berlin. This confronted Kennedy with a difficult dilemma--whether to give up his



search for agreement with Khrushchev or to abandon any pretense of allied solidarity. This choice, however, had to wait, for while the diplomats had been circling around each other trying to find an opening, events in Berlin had not stood still.

## 2. The Lucius Clay Approach

In his letter to Kennedy after the division of Berlin, Mayor Brandt had requested the appointment of General Lucius Clay as Commandant. As a result, Kennedy asked Clay to accompany Vice President Johnson to Berlin. Noting the enthusiasm with which the Berliners welcomed the hero of the Berlin airlift, Kennedy let it be known that he was considering asking Clay to return to Berlin as his Special Representative.

The senior American in Berlin was Major General Albert Watson, the Commandant. Watson reported in his political capacity to Ambassador Walter Dowling in Bonn and in his military capacity to General Bruce Clarke, Commander of the US European Army in Heidelberg. Clarke in turn reported to General Lauris Norstad, who was US Commander-in-Chief in Europe, as well as Supreme Allied Commander for Europe. The US, UK, and France had also given Norstad special responsibilities regarding contingencies which might arise regarding Berlin. That only accounted for the military side of the house. There is in Berlin also a State Department Mission, which was headed by

Allan Lightner. Technically, Lightner reported both to General Watson and to Ambassador Dowling in Bonn. He communicated also, however, directly with the State Department. Although Clay's arrival gave the Berliners a shot in the arm it also complicated an already complex command arrangement.

Had Kennedy and Clay had similar approaches to dealing with the Soviets, matters might not have become so complicated. As it was, differences between Clay and Washington were bound to develop.

Clay demonstrated how he intended to operate promptly after arriving in Berlin on September 19. He asked Watson to increase the number of US patrols on the Autobahn, in order to end harassment of US personnel by East German police. A few days later, he climbed into a helicopter and flew to Steinstuecken.

Steinstuecken is a small community which is part of the US sector of Berlin but separated from it by a few hundred yards of East Germany. This "exclave" had been a bone of contention for years, with the Americans becoming concerned periodically that the East Germans might cut off access to the area. At the time of the erection of the wall around West Berlin, the East Germans began fencing in Steinstuecken and its access road. At first, however, it was not clear what they were doing. This led to a great deal of hand wringing between Berlin and Washington.

The question was ultimately considered by Kennedy but without any clear-cut decision. This was not surprising, since it was not at all certain that the East Germans intended to kidnap the Steinstueckeners.

Alerted to this problem before he left Washington, Clay flew to Steinstuecken shortly after his arrival in Berlin. He took a walk around and talked with the inhabitants, who expressed some apprehension. Several days later Watson sent a three-man patrol to occupy the village. The East Germans blustered and threatened to shoot down the helicopters, particularly when word got out that they were carrying refugees who had escaped. These were, however, empty threats, and the issue gradually subsided. Thus, a problem which had vexed US officials for years was settled by a simple action, and one can only wonder why it had not been taken before.

For the next several weeks, that is the first part of October, Berlin was relatively quiet. By that time, Ulbricht had established that he could control the movement of Germans through the wall. The Allies had also acquiesced in his limiting them to the one crossing point at Friedrichstrasse (or Checkpoint Charlie). This left only the question of whether Ulbricht could control the movement of Allied personnel, who had for years gone into East Berlin without

showing any personal identification. For the military, their uniforms were enough; for civilians in automobiles, their license tags were sufficient. The Allies based their claim that they should not have to show personal identification on the grounds that, as occupying powers, they had rights in all Berlin.

Ulbricht, on the other hand, considered East Berlin a part of East Germany and insisted that the Allies no longer had any rights there. It was one thing, however, to claim this and another to enforce it. He allowed, therefore, several months for the Allies to get used to the wall. Then he issued orders for his guards to lower the barrier another notch.

On Sunday, October 22, Allan Lightner--head of the State Department Mission--and his wife planned to go to East Berlin to see the opera. The East Berlin troupe was admired by the Americans, and Lightner also thought it would be good to "show the flag." After checking in at Checkpoint Charlie with the American Military Police, Lightner drove his blue Volkswagen slowly toward the East German guards. He was not surprised when one of them stood grimly in his path, since the guards were apparently under instructions to make all vehicles stop. When one of them asked to see some identification, Lightner refused to show

10. The guard insisted, and Lightner asked to see a Soviet officer. When the guard declined to call one, Lightner began to drive his car forward, but a guard stood stolidly in his path. Lightner and his wife settled down for a wait.

Learning of the couple's plight, Clay and Watson huddled. When Lightner had sat for an hour, an MP officer approached his car and asked him to return to the American checkpoint. After speaking to Clay and Watson by telephone, Lightner got back into his car, without his wife. He drove slowly toward East Berlin. When East German guards again refused to let him proceed without showing some identification, a squad of MPs--their rifles loaded and at the ready--moved up to where Lightner was. Flanking his Volkswagen, the MPs escorted him into East Berlin. Lightner drove a block, turned around and returned to West Berlin. He and the MPs then went through the same drill again, only this time Lightner drove about a mile in East Berlin before returning.

The following day Ulbricht issued a decree saying that all Allied civilians would have to identify themselves before going into East Berlin. As was characteristic, Ulbricht thus took only a small bite. He left the question of uniformed personnel for a later meal.

After delaying for two days for consultation with higher headquarters, armed patrols again accompanied US officials across the demarcation line. To show that he

meant business, Clay asked Watson to place US forces in West Berlin on alert and deploy tanks near Checkpoint Charlie. All this activity caused some concern in Washington. A State Department spokesman said publicly, "We regard this as a serious development and are taking it up urgently with the governments concerned." This included the British, since unfortunately their officials were authorized to show their passports when asked. In Moscow, Ambassador Thompson called on Gromyko. Khrushchev was, however, preoccupied at that time with winding up the 22d Party Congress, which was meeting in Moscow.

After learning of Clay's moves, the Soviet Commander in East Germany, Marshal Konev, decided that he had better get ready to lend Ulbricht a hand. Soon the Americans began to receive reports that Soviet tanks were moving into East Berlin

With the stage set for a showdown, Clay moved some tanks into Friedrichstrasse and halted them directly on the demarcation line. A short time later there was a roar of motors from Berlin, as six Soviet tanks lumbered into sight and deployed in depth a scant hundred yards from the American tanks. As dark fell, the scene was lit by spotlights. A reporter went up to one of the American tanks and asked a GI if he thought there would be any shooting. The cryptic reply was, "I sure hope not. That would be a tragedy."

As the tension continued to mount, both sides began to edge away from an explosion. Clay told reporters that the

Soviet tanks had proved his point, that the Soviets--not the East Germans--were responsible for the maintenance of Allied rights in Berlin. Khrushchev, anxious not to have a tank battle in the middle of Berlin, ordered Konev to pull back his tanks, in the expectation that the Americans would do the same. Sixteen hours after their arrival, the Soviet tanks started their motors and wheeled around into East Berlin. As Khrushchev had predicted, a short time later the American tanks pulled back into West Berlin.

It is not easy to evaluate the outcome of this test of wills. From one point of view, both sides were fortunate, since--if the tanks had fired at each other--no one can predict with certainty how much explosive lay at the other end of the fuse. American officials in Berlin believed that the conflict would have been contained. While they were probably right, who can say for certain? In any event, both Kennedy and Khrushchev proceeded thereafter with even more caution on Berlin.

With regard to the immediate issues, while Clay may have gained his point, by getting the Soviets back into East Berlin, Ulbricht had also gained his. The day after the tank confrontation ended, the East Germans continued to turn back civilian officials who refused to show their identification documents. Thereafter, US civilian officials no longer went into East Berlin by vehicle. Those few who went travelled either on foot or by subway--when, as they had been authorized all along, they used their passports as identification.

#### CHAPTER 4. THE STRUGGLE OVER ACCESS TO BERLIN

During the latter part of 1961 and early 1962, President Kennedy was preoccupied with the question of nuclear testing. As the Soviets set off one bomb after the other in northern Siberia, he found himself in the midst of a fierce controversy. Some of his advisers insisted that he should resume testing in the atmosphere, and others wanted to push for a ban on further nuclear tests. Kennedy's speech to the UN General Assembly in October reflected his concern. When he saw Macmillan in Bermuda in December, there was an announcement that, unless the Soviets agreed to a test ban at the disarmament conference in March, the United States would resume testing. Therefore, when Secretary Rusk departed for Geneva in February, 1962, his instructions called for him to direct his full efforts toward conclusion of a test ban agreement.

Just before Rusk departed for Geneva, however, an incident took place in the Berlin air corridors which caused him to consider cancelling his trip. This was part of a struggle which went on in the latter part of 1961 and the early part of 1962 over control of access to Berlin. It began as a verbal duel over an International Access Authority, was



taken over by the Soviet and American air forces, and ended up as a triangular quarrel between Khrushchev, Kennedy, and Adenauer.

1. The International Access Authority

The verbal duel between Kennedy and Khrushchev (with Ulbricht as his second) concerned who was going to control access to Berlin. They used as their field of honor Kennedy's proposal for an International Access Authority. Since this proposal caused quite a furor, it is worth tracing its controversial history.

When Kennedy entered the Berlin labyrinth, one of his first acts was to call for new ideas for a "Berlin solution." He had not yet accepted the view that, as long as the Soviets were basically dissatisfied with the status quo, the only solutions were for the Allies to get out of Berlin or for Germany to be reunited. Although the Berlin question had been hashed and rehashed by three Presidents and five Secretaries of State before Kennedy arrived in the White House, the pursuit of the will-o-the-wisp began again in Foggy Bottom. Finally, one suggestion caught Kennedy's attention, the proposal for an International Access Authority.

Free access was so vital to the preservation of the Allied position in Berlin that some officials were reluctant to tamper in any way with the existing arrangements. Rusk's barren talks with Gromyko in New York in September, however, convinced Kennedy that some proposal was needed to keep the talks going. He seized on the International Access Authority as the best tool available. Kennedy introduced the idea to the public and the Soviets at the same time, in an interview with Khrushchev's son-in-law, Alexei Adzhubei-- who also happened to be Editor of Izvestia. This discussion took place at Hyannis Port on November 25, 1961, on the heels of Kennedy's reconciliation with Adenauer.

During his talk with Adzhubei, Kennedy expressed frankly his concern. "In my opinion, if (a peace treaty) is signed, if our rights on the communication lines between the West and West Berlin--which are now governed by the Soviet Union--are turned over to the East German authorities, and if the East Germans should interfere with that right of access for one reason or another, then this would provide for heightened tension, and we would find ourselves. . .once more face to face." Having posed the problem, Kennedy set forth his solution. "All we wish to

do is maintain a very limited number of troops of the three powers in West Berlin and to have, for example, an international administration on the Autobahn so that goods and people can move freely in and out. Then we can have peace in this area for years."

Kennedy's statement immediately precipitated speculation about what he had in mind. When asked a few days later at his press conference, he declined to go into details, saying that they would be saved for negotiations.

Ulbricht and Khrushchev, however, did not wait for details. Whatever Kennedy had in mind, they made it clear that they wanted no part of it. Ulbricht, speaking at a party conference, termed the Kennedy proposal "idle speculations." He said, "This will never happen. The German Democratic Republic is no colonial territory of the Western Powers." The next day, Izvestia--in which the Kennedy interview had appeared --asked on what grounds Kennedy thought it possible "to impose this humiliating procedure on the GDR."

One might have thought that this would dispose of the proposal, but it was only the first round. Kennedy took another look and decided to try to make it look more attractive by adding flights by aircraft to the package, so that the Authority would control both ground and air access. When the State Department subsequently made a

public statement on the International Access Authority, it indicated that the authority would control the Berlin-Helmstedt Autobahn, the Berlin Air Safety Center, airports in West Berlin, and other air traffic facilities. While the statement did not indicate who would be represented on the authority, it later emerged that the US had in mind five Soviet bloc representatives (including East Berlin and East Germany), five western representatives (the US, UK, France, West Germany, and West Berlin), and three neutrals.

Having developed a proposal regarding Berlin which had at least a certain amount of credibility, Kennedy turned his attention to getting some Allied backing for another approach to the Soviets. Kennedy sent Rusk off to Paris in early December to appeal to the NATO Ministers. Their communique simply noted that the US planned to take up the search again for "a basis for negotiations." Couve de Murville observed acidly in a TV interview that once contacts took place one would see "if they lead to something which can make us think that negotiations would be possible in conditions which would be normal." While Macmillan was solidly behind Kennedy, he was anxious to have his Ambassador in Moscow, Sir Frank Roberts, play a role. Kennedy and Macmillan thrashed this out in Bermuda in the latter part of December and agreed "tha

the initial contact would be made by the US Ambassador in Moscow." Macmillan added, however, "that the British Ambassador would be available to play whatever part could be found helpful."

As a result of all this maneuvering, Ambassador Llewellyn Thompson held a series of talks with Gromyko in January, 1962. During these, he introduced the idea of an International Access Authority. Gromyko rejected the proposal flatly, on the grounds that it would contradict the "sovereignty of the German Democratic Republic." On January 31, Kennedy declared at his press conference that no significant progress had been made in the talks between Thompson and Gromyko. He believed, however, that "the channels of communication should be kept widely open, which has been a basic premise of ours for the last few months. . . ."

Two days before Kennedy's press conference, Otto Winzer held one in East Berlin. Winzer was an East German Deputy Foreign Minister and an expert on Allied legal rights in Berlin. He declared that any internationalization of the access routes was "completely incompatible with the German Democratic Republic's sovereign rights." This was old stuff and caused no concern. What was more ominous was Winzer's statement that four power agreements did not cover civilian air traffic to Berlin. Although it was not entirely

clear at the time, this signaled Khrushchev's intention once again to force the pace of negotiations.

## 2. The Air Corridor Incidents

After the 1948 airlift, the Allies and the Berliners were extremely sensitive about air access, particularly since it was the only means of travel to the city for Germans which was not controlled by Ulbricht. The refugees flew to West Germany, as did other Germans whom Ulbricht would like to get his hands on. Furthermore, even though large stockpiles were created after 1948, the Berliners counted on an airlift to supplement them in event of another ground blockade.

When Khrushchev issued his ultimatum in 1958, the Allies began developing plans for preserving access in the face of possible Soviet threats or military action. The Soviet note of August 23, 1961, on "subversive activities" in West Berlin and the use of the air corridors to fly "provocateurs" to West Berlin pointed up the Soviet capability to interfere with flights in the corridors. The Washington Ambassadorial Group asked Paul Nitze to head a working group to review existing plans. This effort went on intensively during the fall and winter of 1961-62.

This planning was paralleled by US and Allied declarations of their determination to resist any encroachments. On the chance that the August 23, 1961 note foreshadowed action against the corridors, Kennedy made a blunt statement the following day, warning Khrushchev in no uncertain terms to proceed with caution. The British and French backed this two days later, on August 26, in identical notes paralleling the United States' reply to the Soviet note. On September 1, the State Department released a Soviet 1947 document, which supported the Allied position regarding the air corridors. The Department followed this a week later by making public a series of four power documents on air access. These Allied reactions apparent caused Khrushchev to pause, while his legal experts re-examined the Soviet position. The unstable situation in Berlin may also have encouraged him to hold off action against the corridors. Early in 1962, however, Khrushchev found the world getting used to the wall. After getting an account of Ambassador Thompson's talks with Gromyko, he found the pace agonizingly slow. Annoyed by Kennedy's proposal for an Access Authority, which Khrushchev considered more ambitious than Kennedy's power position warrant he decided to provide a practical demonstration of the fragility of the Allied position in the air corridors.

The Soviet campaign against allied control of civilian flights in the air corridors began in the Berlin Air Safety

Center on February 7,\* when the Soviet air controller informed his colleagues that the Soviet air force wanted to reserve certain flight levels in the south corridor for the next day. The south corridor is the one in which aircraft fly between Berlin and Frankfurt. The controller indicated that the Soviet air force wanted to use the altitudes up to 7,000 feet for maneuvers. Commercial airliners normally used the altitudes between 7 and 10,000 feet. The Soviets generally used altitudes over 10,000 feet to fly across the corridors. While American military

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\* The Berlin Air Safety Center is a four power (US, UK, French, Soviet) organization created in 1945. It is located in the Allied Control Council Building, a large structure in the middle of Berlin. This building had once been the seat of the four power Control machinery in Germany, before the Soviets withdrew. It is now practically deserted, except for the Air Safety Center, the Allied Working Party and the Allied Travel Office. The role of the Safety Center is to provide a place for the four powers to notify each other of their flights in the air corridors. It does not actually control the Allied flights; this is done by the US air traffic control center at Tempelhof Airport.



aircraft at one time flew occasionally over 10,000, they had for several years flown only under 10,000 feet. In other words, now that the Soviets felt they had exclusive use of altitudes over 10,000 feet, they were trying to move into the lower altitudes. While their objectives were not clear, they may have been attempting to get exclusive use of altitudes under 7,000 feet. This would have restricted Allied aircraft to the narrow band between 7,000 and 10,000 feet.

The Soviet controller's announcement was followed promptly by a huddle in the US Headquarters on Clayallee. General Clay reviewed the situation with General Watson, Allan Lightner, and Richard Boehm, Lightner's air access expert. Lightner made a quick call to Ambassador Dowling in Bonn. Meanwhile, the British and French controllers had consulted their headquarters. As a result, the three Allied controllers informed their Soviet colleague that Allied aircraft would continue to fly in accordance with established procedures and the Soviet authorities would be held responsible for flight safety. General Clay requested General Landon, Commander of the US Air Forces for Europe in Wiesbaden, to send two military aircraft through the corridors the next day at under 7,000 feet. At about the same time, General Norstad in Paris directed that several military aircraft fly at the altitudes the Soviets were attempting to reserve and requested the civil airlines

to continue their normal schedules. The American Embassy in Bonn supported these actions.

On February 8, the contest got underway in earnest. The civilian airlines in the south corridor (Pan Am and Air France) kept to their schedules, flying between 7 and 10,000 feet. Both Soviet and American military aircraft flew below 7,000 feet, with the US air traffic control center at Tempelhof insuring that the American planes did not run into the Soviet aircraft.

The Soviet controller in the Air Safety Center also announced that the Soviet air force wanted to reserve the north and central air corridors the next day, Friday, February 9, for four hours up to 7,500 feet.

Friday was a very active day. Pan American and British European Airways continued their flights to Dusseldorf and Bonn in the central corridor and to Hamburg and Bremen in the north corridor, flying between 7,500 and 10,000 feet. British and American military aircraft flew under 7,500 feet. One of the American planes carried General Lucius Clay and Mayor Willy Brandt, who went to Bremen to fulfill a speaking engagement.

Marshall Konev, who directed day-to-day operations under guidance from the Kremlin, suspended the exercise over the week-end. The

Soviet controller attempted to reserve the central and north corridors again for Monday, February 12 but then cancelled his request at the last minute. Nevertheless, French military aircraft joined British and American in flying in the "reserved" altitudes. On Wednesday, Konev ordered some MIGs to harrass Allied planes. One of them buzzed a plane carrying the British Ambassador to Bonn, Sir Christopher Steel.

On February 15, the day after the Steel incident, the British, French, and American Ambassadors in Moscow delivered identical protests to the Soviet Foreign Office, which had been prepared by the Washington Ambassadorial Group and approved by governments. The note protested the fact that "On February 14, 1962, Soviet aircraft on three occasions seriously threatened by close approach United States aircraft flying in the North Corridor to Berlin. . . ." The note also observed that "The necessary flight information for the Soviet aircraft had not been submitted by the Soviet element in B.A.S.C. (the Berlin Air Safety Center)." The note went on to complain about the attempts to reserve the use of a number of flight levels on February 8, 9, and 12. It also laid heavy stress on complying with "established procedures." In conclusion,

the note stressed, "The United States Government will take the necessary steps to insure the safety of (its) flights and will hold the Soviet government responsible for the consequences of any incidents which might occur." While the note did not specify what steps it would take to insure the safety of its flights, the Soviets were probably aware that General Norstad was prepared to back the Allied hand with military force if necessary.

The Soviet Foreign Office rejected the Allied protest two days later, on Saturday, February 17. The following Monday, however, Konev switched his tactics. Taking note of the Allied complaint that flight plans had not been filed, his Controller in the Air Safety Center started filing flight plans for individual flights by Soviet military transports. It was much more difficult to deal with this tactic. The war-time Allies established the air corridors after the war for use by all four powers, and in fact the Soviets used the corridors for several years for flights to West Germany to get reparations, such as machinery. When reparations payments ceased, these flights stopped also, and after the 1948 airlift the corridors were used mainly by the western Allies. Nevertheless, when the Soviets started filing flight plans for individual flights, technically they appeared to be legally correct.

The net result was a complex and dangerous game of chicken, during which Konev attempted to harrass Allied flights by flying Soviet military transports under 7,000 feet in the south corridor (for technical reasons, 7,500 feet in the central and north). He also used fighters to buzz Allied civil aircraft and appeared at times to be dropping more chaff in the corridors than required for Soviet maneuvers. (Chaff is metallic strips dropped by aircraft to confuse enemy radar.) These activities went on for the latter part of February and through March, 1962.

The Allied response was managed by General Norstad in Paris, within the guidance provided by the British, French, and American governments. As the contest went on, he found it necessary not only to control military but also civil flights. Despite Soviet harrassment, the civilian pilots-- many of whom had been in military uniform at one time--refused to be intimidated. Remarkably, so did most of the passengers.

Konev's campaign reached its height just as Rusk was about to depart for the disarmament conference scheduled to open in Geneva on March 14. For a moment, Rusk considered cancelling his trip, feeling that it was impossible to talk with Gromyko while Khrushchev was kicking the Allies on the shins. Kennedy, however, wanted Rusk to make one more attempt to get a test ban treaty before the US started testing in the atmosphere. He also wanted Rusk to use this occasion to continue the search for a settlement on Berlin. At his first talk with Gromyko on March 11, Rusk remonstrated

with him about Soviet actions in the corridors. British Foreign Secretary Home gave Gromyko a veritable tongue lashing, emphasizing that the Soviets could not hope to reach any accord with the west while behaving in such a manner. Nevertheless, Konev continued his dangerous game throughout the period that Rusk and Home were in Geneva. In fact, the day after Rusk complained to Gromyko, Soviet aircraft started flying at flight levels normally used by civil aircraft. Four days later, they started flying at night. Nevertheless, Allied aircraft kept flying.

On March 30, after Home and Rusk had left Geneva, the Soviets--without explanation--ceased flying in the corridors.

It is still not entirely clear why they stopped--or indeed precisely what their goal was. My estimate is that Khrushchev's primary aim was to bring pressure to bear on Kennedy to move along with negotiations. Konev may also have been attempting to lay the groundwork for withdrawal of the Soviet controller from the Air Safety Center, which would have been followed by an attempt to get the Allies to accept control of their flights by the East Germans. This, however, would have been an even more dangerous move, and we can be grateful that he did not attempt to make it.

With the end of the air corridor incidents, the phase of the crisis which began with the wall came to an end. Kennedy signified this by announcing in April that General Clay was leaving Berlin. The Berliners regretted to see Clay go. He had returned to the city at a time when they badly needed moral support, and he had provided it both with his presence and the audacious way in which he conducted affairs in Berlin during September and October, 1961.

About the time of Kennedy's announcement of Clay's departure, Khrushchev withdrew Konev also and replaced him with the former commander, Col. Gen. Ivan I. Yakubovsky. We will run into him again in 1963.

3. The Triangular Struggle between Kennedy, Khrushchev, and Adenauer

All the while that Konev and Norstad were matching wits in the air corridors, Kennedy continued his search for a modus vivendi on Berlin. Since Gromyko had flatly rejected the proposal for an International Access Authority in his January, 1962 talks with Thompson, Kennedy and his advisers decided to broaden the approach. Henry Owen, of State's Policy Planning Council, and Martin Hillenbrand, Deputy Director of the Berlin Task Force, prepared a more general proposal which the press dubbed the modus vivendi. After some amendment, Kennedy approved its use by Rusk at Geneva.

Since there was a leak in April of the contents of the modus vivendi paper, we now have some idea of the American package. At Geneva, Rusk apparently held out the prospect of several items coveted by Khrushchev. These included an agreement which would prevent acquisition of nuclear weapons by the Germans, an exchange of non-aggression declarations between NATO and the Warsaw Pact, and the formation of East-West German committees. All of this would operate under the umbrella of a permanent conference of deputy foreign ministers of the US, UK, France, and the Soviet Union.

This was not a proposal which Gromyko could reject out of hand. He countered with a proposal for an "arbitration agency" to insure access to Berlin after conclusion of a peace treaty. Ulbricht outlined this proposal publicly before a meeting of his Central Committee on March 21-23, shortly after returning to Moscow from Geneva. He suggested that this body could be used in event of differences between his regime and the Western powers. He made it clear, however, that he and the Soviets would cast the deciding vote. He also emphasized that it would only come into play after withdrawal of the Allied garrisons from Berlin.

By the time Rusk left Geneva, all he and Gromyko could agree to say in a joint public statement was "some progress" had been made "in clarifying points of agreement and points of difference." Even this, however, was enough to raise storm signals on the banks of the Rhine, and Kennedy found himself plunged into a donnybrook with Adenauer and Khrushchev at the same time.



During the Geneva talks, Adenauer became increasingly uneasy as he saw what was unfolding, even though Rusk had conferred with Foreign Minister Schroeder at Lausanne before talking with Gromyko. Adenauer feared that Germany was going to be asked to pay for a Berlin settlement, which was not what Adenauer had in mind at all. The four powers had divided Germany at the end of the war; it was their responsibility to put her back together again. Adenauer had never been enthusiastic about the Kennedy proposal for an International Access Authority. The new American proposals, with such things as NATO-Warsaw Pact declarations and mixed East-West German commissions, would in Adenauer's view only solidify the division of Germany.

On April 10, the State Department asked the German Foreign Office for approval of the US proposals by April 12. Despite the short deadline, the Germans gave a preliminary reaction, which was not unfavorable. On April 13, 1962, the New York Times published the substance of the Kennedy proposals in a story datelined Bonn. Kennedy blew his stack. Rusk, in a strong letter to German Foreign Minister Schroeder, spoke of a "breach of confidence." An angry exchange followed between Washington and Bonn, both in the press and in diplomatic channels.

In this atmosphere, Rusk opened another series of talks with Soviet Ambassador Dobrynin on April 16. On April 20,

Khrushchev spoke publicly of "some glimmers of hope for agreement." As the Rusk-Cromyko talks went on, it became clear that the sticking point was Khrushchev's demand for the withdrawal of Allied garrisons. On April 26, Rusk declared firmly in a press conference that the Allied garrisons were not negotiable. A week later, Pravda asked, "How is this to be understood? If the basic question of replacing the occupation regime and withdrawing the occupation troops from West Berlin is not subject to negotiations, then, one might ask, what is there to be negotiated?"

With this exchange, the Kennedy-Khrushchev effort to find a basis for negotiations over Berlin effectively ended. On May 30, Rusk and Dobrynin held their last meeting. A week later, Khrushchev sent the Allies a note on "provocative activities" by "Fascist elements" in West Berlin, which opened a phase of the Berlin crisis which brought the world face to face with nuclear war.

## CHAPTER 5. THE BERLIN/CUBA CRISIS

By the summer of 1962, it was evident that President Kennedy's search for a basis for negotiations on Berlin was about to fail. After beginning in New York, it had moved to Moscow, to Geneva, and then back to Washington. By that time the Foreign Ministers and Ambassadors all knew their lines but the script was still not good enough for the main players. American Ambassador Walter Dowling managed in May to patch up an agreement with Chancellor Adenauer on the Access Authority and the "modus vivendi" but only after the Chancellor had made it clear that he thought the access proposal unworkable and the prolongation of the Soviet-American talks without results dangerous. Kennedy might have been able to overcome Adenauer's misgivings if his dialogue with Khrushchev had gone better. After his first two meetings with Soviet Ambassador Dobrynin in Washington, however, Secretary Rusk told a TV audience on June 17 that he had found no evidence that the Soviets were willing to agree to a "reasonable settlement" on Berlin. In the meantime, tensions had begun to mount again in the divided city.

### 1. The Storm Clouds Gather

Although Ulbricht had gotten away with the wall in 1961, as its first anniversary approached the Berliners found themselves by no means reconciled to it. East Berliners continued their attempts to escape, sometimes with the help of the West Berlin police. On May 23, a boy jumped into a canal and started swimming toward West Berlin. When East German guards started firing at him, West Berlin police returned the fire. They killed one East German guard and wounded another. The boy made it across the river, although he had been hit seven times, and survived his ordeal. A few days later, a man was not so lucky; he was killed in the canal before he could reach West Berlin. As it became more dangerous on the surface, the Berliners went underground. Max Thomas, 81, led eleven other oldsters into a chicken coop behind his home in East Berlin, and they emerged a few minutes later in West Berlin. While some dug for profit, collecting fees for those delivered to safety, many more--particularly students--worked off their anger at Ulbricht by digging extensive tunnels. In desperate but ineffectual gestures, other West Berliners registered their protests by setting off explosions at the wall. The East German guards retaliated by kidnapping two girls and two boys near the wall in June. One of the girls was wounded in a scuffle

before she was hauled off into East Berlin.

Protests by West Berliners were not limited to the area of the wall. A crowd gathered in front of the Soviet Intourist Travel Agency in West Berlin on May 24 and smashed its windows.

After receiving reports from its Embassy in East Berlin, which is located near the wall at the Brandenburg Gate, the Soviet Foreign Office warned that these incidents must stop. In identical notes to the Allies, the Soviets claimed that "A number of dangerous provocations on the part of the West Berlin police, and also on the part of fascist elements in West Berlin, were carried out in the last ten days against the German Democratic Republic." Furthermore, "on the night of May 24-25 fascist elements damaged the show window of. . .the Intourist agency in West Berlin, staged a hostile demonstration. . .and shouted threats against Soviet officials." If these provocations continue, the notes said, the "responsibility. . .for the consequences. . .will rest with the occupation authorities in West Berlin and with the three occupation powers."

While understanding the anger of the Berliners, Kennedy was concerned as to where these incidents were leading. When the Allies replied to the Soviet note several weeks later, they said that they shared "the apparent concern of the Soviet Government at the increasing number of these

incidents." They pointed out, however, that they were the direct consequences of the wall. While the authorities in West Berlin were instructed "to do everything in their power to avoid aggravating the situation," the Allies added that they supported measures to prevent the murder of refugees and the firing of shots into West Berlin. Finally, the Allies proposed Four Power talks in Berlin "with a view to avoiding. . .the recurrence of such incidents, in particular by seeking means to facilitate the movement of persons and goods within Berlin."

This note went forward on June 25. Two days later Ulbricht publicly rejected the Allied proposal for talks and suggested instead that the East German and West Berlin authorities get together. The Soviets supported Ulbricht in a note several weeks later. "If the United States Government has in mind," it went on, "an investigation of the actions of United States occupation authorities in West Berlin. . .then it undoubtedly has ways and means of conducting such investigations." The note suggested that any talks should be between West Berlin and East Germany. Mayor Brandt, however, was not yet ready to talk to the East German regime about movement through the wall, and Ulbricht's proposal was not accepted.

In the meantime, Ulbricht advertised his determination

to make his prison more secure by beginning to reinforce the wall. The fortifications consisted of barbed wire, trenches, and earth breastworks with firing slits. The West Berlin police responded by constructing guard shelters, and both sides settled down for a seige.

Although Washington could hear thunder in the distance, July opened with an announcement by the Pentagon that the first 7,500 of the 40,000 troops sent to Europe in 1961 would be withdrawn. Kennedy welcomed the first contingent, an Air National Guard support unit, at Andrews Air Force Base near Washington on July 9. While the move may have seemed out of phase with increasing tensions, it was because the reserves could only be held a year.

During mid-July, Kennedy and Khrushchev directed their Foreign Ministers to take advantage of their presence in Geneva to sign the Laos Accords to run through their parts again. Khrushchev did not sweeten the atmosphere by allowing TASS to issue a statement before the Geneva meeting, which reiterated the demand that the Allied troops leave Berlin. He only eased the situation slightly the next day by telling a group of American editors that he would sign a peace treaty "when and only when all possibilities of making our Western partners understand (our position) are exhausted." In

order to be sure that Khrushchev understood the importance he attached to the Geneva talks, Kennedy called in Ambassador Dobrynin. No amount of discussion could, however, close the gap between the Soviet and American positions. Even before the talks between Rusk and Gromyko in Geneva were completed, Kennedy told a press conference that he was disappointed with their lack of progress. Not an easy man to discourage, however, he added that he thought that the dialogue should be continued "before we consider where we are going to go on other roads."

General Yakubovsky, Soviet Commander in East Germany, made his contribution to the deteriorating situation by sending up his fighters the same day as the Kennedy press conference and several days thereafter to buzz Allied Civil and military aircraft in the air corridors.

## 2. The Peter Fechter Murder

It would be hard to say which side approached August 13, 1962 with the greater trepidation. Major General David Gray, the Joint Chiefs' representative on the Berlin Task Force, returned from a trip to Berlin apprehensive about the incidents along the wall. He was particularly concerned about what would happen if an escapee were wounded in the no-man's-land near the wall. Their orders generally enjoined Allied soldiers to remain on the West Berlin side of the wall, unless they were travelling in East Berlin with scheduled



patrols. This issue had aroused General Clay during the previous winter and prompted one of his trips to Washington to see the President.

The Soviets betrayed their concern by sending the Allies another note on August 10, in which they complained of "provocations" timed for August 13. Specifically, they protested the anticipated visit to Berlin by West German President Lubke.

No amount of discussions and protesting, however, could avert the drama which was about to unfold. A storm of resentment had accumulated in West Berlin, and the first anniversary of the wall was bound to see it break. Mayor Brandt and the Commandants sensed that this anger required a means of expression and discussed how to channel it. Demonstrations had traditionally been held at the Reichstag building, which is near the Brandenburg Gate. After August 13, 1961 Brandt held his demonstrations at the Schoeneberger City Hall, which is located some distance from the wall. The June 17 demonstration to commemorate the 1953 uprising was held there. Now, however, the Commandants and Brandt were concerned about getting a large crowd together anywhere. Brandt, therefore, called for a period of quiet, and for three minutes at noon on August 13 the whole of West Berlin fell into silence.

In the evening, there were some spontaneous demonstrations near the wall, which the East Germans replied to with tear gas and water cannon. The West Berlin police dispersed the crowds, and the anniversary passed without serious incident. World Capitals breathed a sigh of--premature--relief.

On Friday, August 17, Peter Fechter and a friend left their construction job in East Berlin during the lunch hour and made their way to the wall not far from Checkpoint Charlie. Peter's friend made it over the wall, but as Peter was climbing it a fusillade of bullets struck him from behind. He fell backward, where he lay at the foot of the wall bleeding to death, as both West and East Berliners watched--all afraid to go to his rescue. American soldiers from Checkpoint Charlie came to the spot but as their orders forbid them to attempt to cross the wall, they were unable to help. Finally, East German reinforcements arrived, and guards--covered by their comrades--carried Peter away to a hospital. A few hours later, he died--the fiftieth victim of the wall.

Peter Fechter seeded the storm. Crowds gathered near Checkpoint Charlie. When word of his death reached them, they began throwing anything they could lay their hands on at the guards on the other side of the wall. The guards replied with tear gas. Insults were hurled at the American soldiers stationed at the Checkpoint. In the early evening,

a bus loaded with guards for the Soviet war memorial arrived. Although the memorial is located several miles away near the Brandenburg Gate, the Soviets complied with the East German decree for occupation personnel to use the Friedrichstrasse crossing point.

Someone hurled a stone at the Soviet bus. As it made its way forward through the crowd, other stones smashed the windows, as the guards tried to protect themselves from flying glass. This began three nights of rioting near the wall, with the Soviet buses now the primary target. The West Berlin police tried to restrain the crowds but without great enthusiasm. Brandt, while concerned, was reluctant to authorize the police to use the force necessary to stop the rioting. On Sunday, the Allied Commandants asked to see the Deputy Soviet Commandant, Col. P. V. Signanov. Signanov returned their letter unopened. In retaliation, General Watson, the American Commandant, refused to see a Soviet officer, who came to the American headquarters to protest the stoning of the buses.

By Tuesday, both the Soviets and the Allies had lost their patience with the rioting. The Allied Commandants and Mayor Brandt issued a statement, which deplored Peter Fechter's death. The Allies also committed themselves to

station an ambulance at Checkpoint Charlie, which would attempt to assist any future victim of the wall. The statement also implicitly condemned the rioting and the stoning of the Soviet buses.

This sign that the Allies and Brandt would not tolerate the disorder any longer came a bit late. That evening, when the Soviet guards showed up at Checkpoint Charlie, they were in armored personnel carriers.

### 3. The Armored Personnel Carrier Incident

After the stoning of Soviet buses had gone on for three days, General Yakubovsky--probably with the Kremlin's approval--sent the guards in armored personnel carriers on Tuesday, August 21. These were just what their name implied, armored vehicles for transporting soldiers. When they first arrived at the checkpoint, the American MPs telephoned to headquarters for instructions, and General Watson decided that it would be best to let them proceed.

As soon as Bonn, Paris, and Washington learned what had happened, the consensus was that--while the Soviets had some cause--they could not be permitted to run around West Berlin in their combat garb. One of the Soviet

objectives was to increase their "presence" in West Berlin, and allowing the Soviets to have the run of the city was bound to cause uneasiness among the West Berliners--who were already edgy. Before the Allies could decide what to do, the Soviets struck again. The day after the first use of the armored personnel carriers, while the Berlin Task Force was meeting, Grover Penberthy was called to the secure telephone in the State Department Operations Center to take a call from Berlin. When he returned, he reported that the Soviets had just announced the abolition of their Commandant in East Berlin.

The Soviet Commandant was the Russian counterpart to General Watson and his British and French colleagues. Even after the Soviets left the Allied Kommandatura for Berlin in 1948, the Allied Commandants continued to have contact with him. A great deal of business was also conducted between the Commandants' Political Advisers. After August 13, 1961, the Soviets attempted to disclaim responsibility for East Berlin and tried unsuccessfully to get the Allies to deal with the East Berlin authorities. This was one of the points at issue in the October, 1961 tank confrontation. When the Soviet Government in early June, 1962 protested the "provocations" by West Berliners against East Berlin guards, the Allies noted in their reply that they were pleased to see that the Soviets were assuming responsibility

for East Berlin. After the Allied Commandants tried unsuccessfully to contact the Soviet Deputy Commandant about the Peter Fechter killing and General Watson countered by refusing to see his representative, the Soviets moved to end the argument.

A communique issued by the Soviet Defense Ministry on August 22 explained that in 1955 the role of the Commandant's office had been limited to control of movement of Allied personnel to and from West Berlin, guarding the German war criminals at Spandau Prison, and guarding the Soviet war memorial. The Allied Commandants, however, had tried to use the Commandant to interfere with events in East Berlin. With the abolition of his office, the Commandant's functions would be "temporarily within the jurisdiction of the headquarters of the group of Soviet forces in Germany." In other words, General Yakubovsky.

This move took the Allies completely by surprise. Kennedy called Frank Cash of the Berlin Task Force and asked him, "Why, with all those plans, do you never have any for what actually happens?" It was not an easy question to answer. Cash might, however, have quoted Kennedy's predecessor, who said one time, "Plans are nothing.. Planning is everything." In other words, the plans seldom anticipate what actually happens. They simply prepare officials for what happens, by getting them acquainted with each other, developing a common way of looking at the problem, and perhaps leading

to the development of assets and resources they might not otherwise have thought of. The opponent, however, usually has his own scenario, and events often intrude which neither side has anticipated. The Peter Fechter death and consequent rioting was a perfect case in point. Nor could the Allies have anticipated that Khrushchev would take advantage of the ensuing confusion to abolish his Commandant in Berlin.

After the Allies scratched their heads, they decided there was nothing they could do to prevent the Soviets from making this move. They announced, therefore, that "The Soviet Government obviously has authority to organize or reorganize its military structure in Germany as it sees fit." The Allied Commandants would, however, continue to discharge their duties in Berlin. In addition, "They will continue to consider the Soviet officials as responsible for carrying out their obligations regarding the Soviet Sector in Berlin." Having delivered themselves of this declaration, the Allies turned back to the task of deciding what to do about the armored personnel carriers, which were coming into West Berlin every evening.

After considerable discussion, the Allies agreed to tell Yakubovsky to use the Sandkrug Bridge crossing point, which was near the Soviet war memorial in the British sector. This would at least avoid the long trip through the city.

At first it was hard to sell this to Kennedy, who doubted that the use of armored personnel carriers rather than buses really made all that much difference. He intimated this in a press conference on August 29, when he said that he did not think their use was affecting Allied rights in West Berlin. When it became clear, however, that the Allies were getting a black eye in West Berlin, he agreed to ask the Soviets to use the Sandkrug Bridge crossing point.

After another round of discussion with the President and the Allies, the Commandants informed Yakubovsky that, since there was no further need for armored protection for the guards, they should return to using buses. Yakubovsky promptly complied--twenty-four days after the first armored personnel carrier showed up at Checkpoint Charlie!

While the Allies were a bit puzzled by the alacrity with which Yakubovsky complied when confronted with a demand, it later became apparent that the Soviets had good reason to avoid any showdown at that time in Berlin. Three days before Yakubovsky returned to using buses, TASS issued a statement which indicated that Khrushchev wanted to avoid trouble in Berlin until after the American elections. This was not just out of the goodness of his heart. This September 11 statement was appended to a much longer one on Cuba!



#### 4. Thunder and Lightning over Berlin

Events in Berlin in the summer and early fall of 1962 cast an ominous shadow. It was hard to define but somehow everyone felt that the real test on Berlin could not be avoided much longer. Since Khrushchev had "tried the Allies on" in the air corridors in early 1962, there was an inclination to expect the next challenge to be on the Autobahn. With this in mind, Allied planners concentrated on preparing rules of conduct for Allied convoys. The Germans were preoccupied with possible interference with civilian traffic, and the Ambassadorial Group devoted considerable effort to planning for this contingency. Just in case Khrushchev decided to make his move in the corridors, air access planning was reviewed and improved in the light of the February-March incidents.

The signals from Khrushchev during September and early October were mixed, as was the Allied reaction. On September 2, the day the Allies told Yakubovsky to use the Sandkrug Bridge to get to the Soviet War Memorial, Ernesto (Che) Guevara ended a visit to Moscow. The communique said that the Soviets had agreed to provide Cuba with "armaments and. . .technical specialists for training Cuban servicemen." Two days later, when the armored personnel carriers began using the Sandkrug crossing, Kennedy warned Khrushchev

In a press conference not to push him too hard on Cuba. That Friday, he asked Congress to authorize him to call 150,000 reserves to the colors. The next day, the Soviet ship Omsk arrived in Cuba.

With tension mounting, both Khrushchev and Kennedy made double-barreled statements. At the end of the TASS statement on Cuba on September 11, Khrushchev indicated that he was putting Berlin on ice until after the American elections. Two days later, Kennedy declared that the US had no intention of invading Cuba but warned Khrushchev again against use of Cuba to threaten the western hemisphere.

Meanwhile, the pot continued to boil in Berlin. Several nights, there were mysterious explosions in East Berlin. On September 21, the East Germans delayed civilian traffic on the Autobahn for several hours, apparently because of heavy US troop traffic. Three days later, the Soviets demanded that the personnel of an American convoy dismount from the vehicles to be counted. Since this was a small convoy, which under US rules did not dismount, the convoy commander refused. The Soviets refused to clear the convoy, and the alarm bells rang in Allied capitals. General Earle Wheeler, Deputy US Commander-in-Chief in Europe, was on the verge of authorizing the convoy to proceed without clearance when the Soviets cleared it. A confrontation on the Autobahn was thus narrowly averted.

Castro announced on September 25 that the Soviets were planning to build a fishing port in Havana Harbor as headquarters for a Cuban-Soviet fishing fleet. The same day, Soviet MIGs buzzed a US military plane and an Air France plane in the Berlin air corridor, and the following day, a MIG almost collided with a Pan American plane.

Reflecting his desire to take all possible steps to avoid the signature of a Soviet-East German peace treaty, Secretary McNamara on September 28 warned that the US was prepared to use nuclear weapons if necessary to defend Berlin. This statement also reflected the anxiety he had heard expressed in Germany during a recent visit that the Kennedy administration might not fight for Berlin. On the last day of September, Kennedy met with Rusk and British Foreign Secretary Home to assess their recent talks in New York with Gromyko. They concluded that the storm could break at any time and announced that, "There was complete agreement on the assessment of the dangers of the Berlin situation and on the continued need of the western powers to stand firm on their vital interests."

During the first two weeks of October, Kennedy stepped up his warnings to Khrushchev, and the Soviet leader tried to reassure the Americans. Congress passed resolutions on both Berlin and Cuba, authorizing the President to use

force if necessary to fulfill US commitments to Berlin and to prevent Cuba from becoming a threat to the rest of the western hemisphere. Rusk, McNamara, and Bobby Kennedy all made it clear to the press that they were bracing for a crisis over Berlin. Meanwhile, Soviet Ambassador Dobrynin called on Bobby Kennedy and Chester Bowles, to assure them that Khrushchev planned to do nothing before the American elections.

Sunday, October 14 was the pivotal day. In Berlin, Mayor Brandt warned the Soviets in a radio broadcast that if they resorted to military force in Berlin, the East Germans would revolt. Presidential Assistant McGeorge Bundy, in a TV interview, stated that the US would act on its own if necessary to protect Berlin. Meanwhile, two U-2s flew over the western end of Cuba, taking photographs of the frantic Soviet efforts to install the missiles which had begun arriving in Cuba on the Omsk the previous month. This marked the beginning of what soon became known as the Cuban missile crisis.

#### 5. Berlin and Cuba

Throughout the crisis, Washington was concerned with the possibility that Khrushchev would respond to American action against Cuba in Berlin. The parallel seemed obvious.

Just as Cuba was in America's backyard, so Berlin was in Khrushchev's. Whereas Kennedy had the advantage of being in a position to control movement to Cuba with naval power, Khrushchev was able to control travel to Berlin with land power. Besides, talk of blockading Cuba inevitably evoked memories of the Berlin blockade.

The connection became clear during Kennedy's talk with Gromyko on October 18, which was devoted both to Berlin and Cuba. Gromyko reiterated assurances that Khrushchev had given Ambassador Kohler several days earlier, no trouble on Berlin prior to the elections unless it were caused by the Americans. At that point, Khrushchev would want to reach an agreement which led to the withdrawal of western forces, or he would proceed with a peace treaty. Kennedy reiterated the Allied determination to remain in Berlin. Turning to Cuba, he complained about the arms build-up since summer. Gromyko steadfastly denied that this was for anything but defensive purposes.

As soon as Kennedy decided to use a naval quarantine as the first step toward getting the Soviet missiles and bombers out of Cuba, he asked about the status of Berlin planning. McGeorge Bundy called Martin Hillenbrand, who had replaced Foy Kohler as Director of the Berlin Task Force when Kohler went to Moscow as Ambassador, and asked

that he attend a meeting that Saturday night at the White House. About midnight, Hillenbrand telephoned several task force officers and asked that they come into the office on Sunday. After Hillenbrand informed them about the missiles, they discussed the planning. In the end, they decided that it would be inadvisable to reopen any of the plans at that point. They were held by headquarters in Washington and all over Europe, and any suggestions for changes at that point would only cause confusion. In any event, many of the plans were Allied documents, and they could not be discussed without some explanation, which was precluded by the desire for secrecy. Finally, after over three years' work on the plans, it was difficult to say what improvements could be made in the next thirty-six hours.

Since at that point few State Department officers had been cleared for information on the missiles, the Berlin Task Force officers found themselves swept into the work on Cuba.

When Kennedy made his address to the nation on Monday night, Paul Nitze--who was a member of the NSC Executive Committee established to deal with Cuba--invited his British, French, and German colleagues to the State Department to hear the telecast. These were the Embassy and military officers with whom Nitze had been discussing military

strategy regarding Berlin for the previous year. As soon as they saw the photos of the missile installations, they all realized they were on the eve of a major crisis. Having examined possible naval measures to counter Soviet interference with Berlin access, they were well familiar with the risks involved in a quarantine of Cuba. After months of intensive work on Berlin, their first thoughts were of that divided city. They were reassured, however, when they heard the firm position taken by President Kennedy, including when he declared, "Any hostile move anywhere in the world against the safety and freedom of peoples to whom we are committed--including in particular the brave people of West Berlin--will be met by whatever actions is needed."

This declaration was also heard by the people of West Berlin, who realized better than most that their fortunes rode with the contest about to be waged between Kennedy and Khrushchev.

As fate would have it, a number of US convoys were scheduled to transit the Autobahn that week. While they might have been cancelled, no serious thought was ever given to it, since this might have conveyed an impression of irresolution to the Soviets. Soviet guards made a play to get one of the soldiers of one convoy, which did not dismount under US rules, to dismount to be counted. When the convoy commander

refused, the guards let the convoy proceed.

Kennedy asked Paul Nitze to head a working group of the Executive Committee to keep an eye on Berlin. The other members included Ambassador Llewellyn Thompson-- also a member of the Executive Committee, Martin Hillenbrand, and Major General David Gray of the Joint Staff. They met daily during the acute phase of the crisis, even though Berlin at that point could scarcely have been more quiet.

Although the crisis came and went without any incidents in Berlin, it had a decisive effect on Khrushchev's scenario. Before his missiles were discovered, he had suggested that he might visit the UN again after the November elections. At that time, he intended to have a showdown with Kennedy on Berlin. If he had gotten away with his Cuban gamble, it is not difficult to see that he would have arrived in Gotham holding a strong hand.

After October, nothing further was heard of Khrushchev's promised journey to New York. This did not mean, however, that the Berlin crisis was completely over.



## CHAPTER 6. CHALLENGE TO GROUND ACCESS

With the withdrawal of Khrushchev's missiles from Cuba, the world breathed a sigh of relief and began to hope for better times in 1963. The United States and its European allies were so optimistic that they found it possible to return to their family quarrels. Before 1962 had even ended, Kennedy and Macmillan found themselves in Bermuda to patch up the damage caused by the precipitate cancellation of the Skybolt. This was an air-to-ground missile on which the British had depended to extend the life of their V-bombers. Kennedy's and Macmillan's solution, which was to assist the British to acquire nuclear submarines with Polaris missiles, was not at all well received in Paris. Early in the new year, De Gaulle shocked the West by excluding Britain from membership in the Common Market. De Gaulle and Adenauer followed this by signing a treaty which committed their two countries to close cooperation in the fields of foreign policy, defense, and cultural affairs. This pact should have culminated these two statesmen's efforts to realize the dream of Franco-German friendship. Unfortunately it caught the United States and its other allies by surprise. Instead of being welcomed as a historic step, it precipitated another round of suspicion and recrimination between Washington and Bonn. This was ironic, since it was usually Adenauer who accused Kennedy of acting without proper consultation.

Undeterred by these reverses in the western camp, Kennedy initiated a major effort to bridge the chasm between America and the Soviet Union. In a speech at American University, in Washington, D. C. he called upon Americans to reexamine their views toward their opponents and the cold war. He also announced that he, Macmillan, and Khrushchev had agreed to make another effort to conclude a test ban treaty. Shortly after this speech, Kennedy journeyed to Europe, to reap the harvest of his recent successes and to lay the groundwork for gaining acceptance of his new approach to the Soviets. Khrushchev reciprocated by announcing in East Berlin several days after Kennedy's June visit to West Berlin that the Soviet Union was prepared to conclude a limited test ban treaty.

If the missile crisis was followed by optimism, the signature of the test ban treaty on August 5 created an atmosphere of euphoria. Many people in Washington believed that the treaty foreshadowed a series of agreements with the Soviet Union. The British Government began a drive for the conclusion of a non-aggression pact between NATO and the Warsaw Pact, which the British and Americans had committed themselves to explore with their Allies when initialling the test ban treaty. This effort was, however, doomed in advance to failure, since the Germans considered

such a pact tantamount to acceptance of the division of Germany. In Washington, projects for bilateral agreements with Moscow which had been gathering dust, such as a consular convention and a civil aviation agreement, were removed from the shelf. While they held out only a limited prospect for an improvement in Soviet-American relations, even this was nurtured. There was also talk of the US selling large quantities of wheat to the Soviet Union, which was experiencing a poor harvest.

With the emphasis in the White House and the Kremlin on improving relations, Berlin was understandably relatively quiet. Secretary Rusk and Ambassador Dobrynin had another round of talks, but by this time both sides were resigned to their failure to make any progress. The dialogue in fact never went beyond the proposals advanced at Geneva in March, 1962. From time to time, the east Germans delayed civilian traffic on the Autobahn, and planning in the Washington Ambassadorial Group shifted from Allied to German access. In April, Soviet aircraft fired some rockets dangerously close to a private aircraft piloted by a British comedian, Hughie Green. The Soviets at first maintained that private aircraft had no business in the air corridors but soon backed off when the Allies insisted that they would determine which of their planes flew to Berlin.

These incidents did not seem to fit any pattern, and many officials came to the conclusion that Cuba not only marked the climax but the end of the Berlin crisis.

Even members of the Berlin Task Force, who were more alert than most to signs of trouble, began to relax. In early August, a group of key officers in the task force decided to make a trip to Europe, to talk with their colleagues in Bonn, Berlin, and Paris. They were talking with Arthur R. (Pete) Day in his office at the US Headquarters in Berlin on October 10 about convoy procedures when he received word that a convoy had apparently been detained by Soviet guards at Marienborn, at the west end of the Autobahn, in a dispute over procedures. The group went into the Emergency Operations Center to learn what had happened.

#### 1. Background of Dispute

The procedures for processing Allied convoys on the Autobahn have been a bone of contention ever since World War II. Whereas fairly detailed agreements were worked out governing flights in the air corridors, there were no parallel agreements regarding ground access. The Soviets did not hesitate to exploit this situation. The years after the war were, therefore, filled with disputes over Allied movement on the Autobahn. As time passed a group of procedures was developed which was acceptable to both sides, and the

remaining issues were sliced even thinner.

By 1961 the active disagreements over processing Allied convoys had been reduced to three. First, the Soviets insisted that the Allied Military in Berlin notify the Soviet checkpoints in advance when a large convoy was scheduled. They claimed that they wanted to be sure to have sufficient personnel on hand and to have time to clear the checkpoint area of other traffic. In practice, American authorities had been giving advance notice to the Soviets for many years, whenever they thought this necessary. The Americans, were, however, suspicious of Soviet motives, believing they wanted to use this requirement for advance notification as a means of gaining control over movements by Allied convoys. They feared that, if this request were granted, the Soviets would next seek to specify when convoys could move through the checkpoint.

The second issue was over the soldiers dismounting from trucks to be counted. In the late 1950s, the Allies and the Soviets agreed on a procedure for documenting convoys, which involved verifying the number of personnel at each end of the Autobahn. The Soviets based this requirement on their suspicion that the Allies might use convoys to

drop off agents or to pick up refugees while transiting East Germany. The Soviet guards maintained that it was difficult to count GIs sitting in the backs of trucks and that it would be easier if they got out of the vehicles and formed into ranks.

When the convoy commanders balked at this, the Soviets--some of whom were not very tall--suggested that the truck tailgates be lowered. This would make it easier for the guards to see into the backs of the trucks. The Americans--particularly those in Berlin--generally felt that this would be tantamount to granting the Soviets the right to inspect the vehicles, a practice which they had steadily opposed. They refused, therefore, to lower tailgates and were supported by higher headquarters.

In considering these points of disagreement, one should keep in mind that underlying them was a basic issue--whether the Soviets could unilaterally impose changes in procedure. If this were granted, the Allies felt that one day they would find that the Soviets had evolved a set of procedures which could be manipulated to deny Allied access to Berlin, while appearing to be enforcing "long standing procedures." This could in time make the Allied position in Berlin untenable. While, therefore, there were differences within the

American government and among the Allies from time to time over the response to Soviet demands, there was no disagreement over the necessity to resist Soviet claims that it "controlled" access to Berlin.

After years of resisting Soviet efforts to get convoy passengers to dismount to be counted or to get tailgates lowered, the American position was inadvertently struck a serious blow at the time of the wall. When Col. Glover Johns' battle group arrived at the western end of the Autobahn on August 19, 1961, he ordered his men to dismount. While this was regrettable, it was also understandable. Johns had not been briefed on this issue; his men had been on the road for many hours and were tired; and his orders were to get to Berlin promptly. The Soviets, however, soon seized on this incident as a precedent and began to press other convoys to dismount. Several months went by before General Clay learned that convoys were dismounting. He immediately urged General Watson to issue orders for the practice to cease. After a period of testing the Soviet reaction, Clay, Watson, and Lightner (head of the State Department Mission) decided to allow convoys with more than thirty passengers to dismount. The Soviets cagily began to ask that convoys just under

thirty passengers dismount, while allowing those with only a few passengers to proceed.

This issue dribbled along throughout 1962 and the first part of 1963. Several convoys were detained in August, 1962, at the time of the difficulties in Berlin following the death of Peter Fechter, but they were released before a serious situation developed. There were also some minor disputes during the Cuban missile crisis in October, 1962.

During 1962 it became obvious to officials concerned with Berlin that in due course there was likely to be a serious dispute with the Soviets over convoy procedures. After some preliminary discussion among the Americans, General Lauris Norstad took the lead in developing rules of conduct for Allied convoys, in consultation with the Allied Commandants in Berlin. The Washington Ambassadorial Group then took the task on and developed rules of conduct acceptable to governments. These were approved during the summer of 1962. Ironically, about the time he approved these rules--which were destined to be employed a year later--President Kennedy asked Frank Cash of the Berlin Task Force why it never had plans for what actually happened!



## 2. First US Convoy Detention

During the week of October 6, 1963, one of the battle groups in Berlin was due to be replaced by one in the Federal Republic. This was the "augmentation" battle group, the original of which was sent to Berlin at the time of the wall. Although a succession of these units had been in Berlin for over two years, the Army kept them there on temporary duty in the expectation that in due course they would be withdrawn. (The last elements actually did not leave Berlin until early 1966.) Since assignment to Berlin meant separation from their families, who remained in West Germany, the 7th Army rotated these battle groups every three months. As a consequence, there was an unusually large amount of traffic on the Autobahn during the week of the rotation, with over a thousand soldiers moving in each direction in several hundred vehicles.

While this provided more than the usual opportunity for incidents, there was no reason to expect that a serious one would arise on this occasion. On the contrary, the general assumption in the wake of the test ban treaty was that Berlin would remain quiet. As an augury of improving Soviet-American relations, Kennedy announced on October 9 his decision to encourage grain dealers to sell \$250 million worth of wheat to the Soviet Union.

On this very day, convoy 18, which meant it was the eighteenth convoy to transit the Autobahn during October, arrived at the Marienborn checkpoint. Marienborn is at the western end of the Autobahn, only a few yards from West Germany. Although the convoy had more than thirty passengers, the convoy commander refused the Soviet request for the soldiers to dismount, because it was raining. After a brief time, however, the rain stopped, and the GIs climbed out of the vehicles. The same dispute arose over convoy 21, which had sixty passengers, later in the day. About an hour later, it again stopped raining.

By the following day, October 10, the American headquarters in Berlin was braced for trouble. Convoy 24 arrived at the Babelsberg checkpoint, which is just outside Berlin, early in the morning. It had twenty vehicles but only two passengers. The Soviet guards cleared it promptly, and it sped across East Germany. About an hour before it arrived at the western end of the Autobahn, convoy 27 arrived at Marienborn from West Germany headed toward Berlin. This convoy, which was commanded by 1st Lt. Raymond C. Fields of Pawnee, Oklahoma, had only twenty-five passengers, which meant

it would not dismount under American procedures. Fields was still arguing with the Soviet officers when convoy 24 arrived from Berlin. Although the Soviets had not asked the two passengers to dismount at the Berlin end, the Soviet checkpoint commander now demanded that they get out of the vehicles. When this was refused, both convoys were detained. An hour later another convoy arrived from Berlin. Although it had more than thirty passengers, the convoy commander--under instructions from Berlin--refused to be processed as long as the other two convoys were detained. Thus by noon, there were 71 vehicles and 230 men in three convoys at the Marienborn checkpoint at the western end of the Autobahn. Unless one side backed down, Kennedy and Khrushchev were in for another test of wills.

When word reached the American headquarters in Berlin that Lt. Fields' convoy had been held, a team of military and State Department officers assembled in the Emergency Operations Center. In a short time, Major General James Polk, who had replaced Watson as Commandant earlier in the year, arrived from one of his regular meetings with the British and French Commandants. Polk was soon in communication by secure teletype with the Army headquarters in Heidelberg and by secure telephone with Ambassador McGhee in Bonn. Heidelberg in turn communicated with the European Command in Paris, which flashed word to the Joint Chiefs

of Staff in Washington. Ambassador McGhee also reported promptly to the State Department. Throughout the day, the wires within Europe and across the Atlantic hummed with a step by step account of events as they unfolded.

By coincidence, back in Washington, Soviet Foreign Minister Gromyko was due to call in the afternoon on Kennedy. When the President confronted him with news of the convoy detentions, Gromyko expressed complete surprise and insisted he could throw no light on what had happened. He probably left the White House with an uneasy feeling. Almost exactly a year before, a similar talk with Kennedy had been followed by the Cuban missile crisis.

While Kennedy and Gromyko talked, events continued to unfold in Germany. In the middle of the afternoon, convoy 25, which had more than thirty passengers, dismounted and proceeded on into West Germany. This left two convoys at the checkpoint.

On instructions from General Polk, the US Detachment Commander at Helmstedt, Major Anderson, made an oral protest to the Soviet duty officer at Marienborn. Helmstedt is the Allied checkpoint near Marienborn. The Soviet officer suggested that, if all vehicles with four or more passengers would dismount, the convoys could proceed. Since this did not conform to US procedures,

Major Anderson refused. On General Polk's recommendation, US Army Headquarters in Heidelberg instructed Col Paul Skowronek, the head of the US liaison mission assigned to the Soviet forces in East Germany, to protest to his Soviet contacts in Potsdam. After consulting higher headquarters, Polk sent Col Skowronek back to Potsdam to inform the Soviets that, if the convoys were not released by fifteen minutes before midnight, they would proceed without Soviet clearance.

After they received this notice, Soviet guards at the checkpoint placed armed soldiers in front of Lt. Fields' convoy. They also placed trucks and barriers across the Autobahn. When he learned of this, General Polk ordered the convoy to block all traffic on the Autobahn. As the time limit drew near, tension mounted. Since it had never been done before, no one knew what the Soviets would do if the convoy attempted to proceed.

Five minutes before the time limit was up, the Soviet checkpoint commander announced that he would process the convoys without the GIs dismounting--provided that the convoy would stop blocking other traffic. Lt. Fields agreed, and shortly after midnight his convoy was speeding across East Germany toward Berlin. Washington and other capitals breathed a sigh of relief.

When Fields arrived at Babelsberg, near Berlin, at about four in the morning, the Soviet checkpoint commander

again insisted that the passengers dismount. It soon became clear that the Soviets had just moved the dispute from one end of the Autobahn to the other, where they probably felt that they had a greater advantage. They had not taken into account, however, the resourcefulness of General Polk. In a few hours a large convoy, with 26 vehicles and 120 riflemen, arrived at the checkpoint, headed for West Germany. The GIs dismounted to be counted. When the Soviet guards signaled the convoy commander to proceed, he held fast, to make it clear that if there were trouble Fields' convoy was not on its own.

With his hand thus strengthened, Polk again went through the drill of protests and in mid-morning notified the Soviets that Fields' convoy would proceed without clearance in an hour. This time, however, the Soviet did not back down. General Ivan I. Yakubovsky, the Soviet Commander in East Germany, ordered fifteen armored personnel carriers to the checkpoint. When Fields ordered his trucks forward, they were confronted by loaded machine guns. Unless the Americans were prepared to try to shoot their way through, they had no choice but to hold fast or back down. Polk ordered Fields to settle down for another long wait. By evening all personnel in his convoy had enjoyed their first hot meal, brought from Berlin, since the previous morning.

Back in Washington, Secretary Rusk and his advisers huddled with President Kennedy. Rusk then called in Soviet Ambassador Dobrynin and urged him to prevail upon the Kremlin to release the convoy. He pointed out that it was difficult for the US to continue its efforts to improve relations in such an atmosphere. In Moscow, Ambassador Foy Kohler reinforced this effort by calling on Deputy Foreign Minister Zorin.

When dawn broke on October 12, two days after the original detention, Lt. Fields' convoy and the larger one supporting him were still at Babelsberg. The GIs had another hot meal, and two of them went to Berlin on sick call. Shortly before noon, the Soviet checkpoint commander made a final attempt to get the Americans to deviate from their established procedures. He asked that the men move to the rear of the trucks and stand up. When this was declined, he asked permission to climb inside the trucks. By this time it was clear that he had orders to extricate himself from his predicament on the best terms possible. After further argument, he asked that vehicles containing eight or more passengers dismount. Finally, he threw up his hands and began counting the men in the trucks. Fields climbed into his jeep and led his convoy into Berlin--almost fifty-three hours after it was originally detained at the other end of the Autobahn.

In Moscow, Khrushchev informed the press that he had ordered the convoy released because the Americans had

complied with Soviet procedures. He also commented jocularly on the "self-control" exercised by the GIs. (Actually, they had dismounted a few at a time when they wanted to relieve themselves.)

### 3. "Harmonization" of Allied Convoy Procedures

The detention of Lt. Fields' convoy focused the spotlight on a dispute which had been going on among the Allies and within the American Government for many months. Over the years the British and Americans had developed slightly different convoy procedures. This meant that the British would dismount some convoys which the Americans would not. The bodies of British trucks were also higher than the American, and the British agreed to lower tailgates when the Soviets requested. In other words, had an identical British convoy arrived at the checkpoint immediately before an American convoy, it might have complied with Soviet requests.

The French practice was yet another question. Madame Alphand, the attractive wife of the French Ambassador, quipped at a Washington party, "We French ne-vaire lower our tailgates." This was correct. French troops normally moved to and from Berlin by rail.

During 1962 there was some discussion within the US Government and between it and its allies regarding agreeing on common procedures. This came to naught. The Soviets were concentrating on American convoys and leaving the British alone. If they moved toward American procedures,



some British feared that they too would run into trouble. Many American officials on the other hand were opposed to relaxing their procedures to come nearer the British.

After the American convoy incident, American officials took a fresh look at their attitude. The British also saw the problem in a new light when one of their convoys was detained for six hours on October 16. Gradually a consensus developed in favor of working out a common approach, so that the Allies could more readily support each other during any future detentions.

The British Commandant called an emergency meeting late one night, after receiving a request for the views of the Commandants from General Lyman Lemnitzer. (Lemnitzer had replaced General Norstad in Paris.) In a few hours the Commandants reached agreements on differences which had haunted them for years. After several weeks of intense negotiations, the Ambassadorial Group in Washington submitted an agreed formula to governments. President Kennedy balked at first, on the grounds that this would open the US to the Soviet charge that it was arbitrarily changing its practices. He finally agreed, however, when he saw that the British and French had in all essentials adopted American rules.

The Allies transmitted the new "harmonized" procedures to General Yakubovsky in Germany on October 29. These provided that convoys with more than thirty passengers

would dismount if requested by the Soviets. The tailgate question was settled by specifying that tailgates higher than six feet would be lowered, which meant in practice that most British trucks would lower tailgates and most American would not.

With these procedures agreed and the Soviets for the first time officially informed, the Allies were ready to test the Soviet reaction by sending another convoy.

#### 4. Second US Convoy Detention

The test convoy arrived at the Marienborn checkpoint at the western end of the Autobahn at nine in the morning on November 4, six days after Yakubovsky had received the Allied procedures. The convoy contained twenty passengers. When the Soviets demanded that they dismount, the convoy commander refused. The Soviet checkpoint commander made it clear that, in this case, he would not allow the convoy to be processed. The GIs got out their pocket books and playing cards and settled down for a long wait.

Paul Aylward of the Berlin Task Force was spending the night at the State Department Operations Center. When Berlin flashed word of the detention, he telephoned other task force officers, who dragged themselves out of bed and assembled in the Operations Center before dawn. When Secretary Rusk made his usual early morning call from home, he was informed of the detention. When by mid-morning (mid-afternoon in Berlin) it was clear that the Soviets

would not release the convoy after a short detention-- as they had the British--Rusk went to the White House to see the President. He was accompanied by several advisers, including Ambassador-at-Large Llewellyn Thompson and Berlin Task Force Director Richard H. Davis. The meeting was also attended by Secretary of Defense McNamara, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Maxwell Taylor, and McGeorge Bundy. The purpose was to get Kennedy's authorization for the convoy to attempt to proceed without Soviet processing. After some discussion, Kennedy agreed that, if the convoy were not cleared in a few hours, General Polk in Berlin could set a time limit, after which the convoy would move forward without clearance.

Kennedy also asked Rusk to call in Soviet Ambassador Dobrynin. As it turned out, Dobrynin was out of town, but the Soviet Minister, Kornienko, came in. Rusk noted that, in view of the fact that the Allies had informed the Soviets of their procedures, the present detention was obviously not a misunderstanding.

At ten in the evening, after receiving the President's approval, General Polk sent word to Gen. Yakubovsky that, if the convoy were not released within two hours, it would proceed without clearance. Yakubovsky instructed his personnel at the checkpoint to continue to insist on dismounting. At midnight, the convoy started to move forward.

As expected, Soviet armored personnel carriers again drew out across the Autobahn, and the convoy was blocked. The GIs again settled down for a long wait, sleeping as best they could in the back of the trucks.

Back in Washington, the Berlin Task Force had been weighing what move to recommend if, as expected, the convoy were blocked. There had been some discussion of this after the previous detention, but no conclusions had been reached. As soon as word was received from Berlin that the personnel carriers had been moved across the Autobahn, there was a huddle in Secretary Rusk's office. Ambassador Thompson, on the recommendation of the task force staff, suggested that the British and French be asked to send identical convoys from Berlin the next day. This would require the Soviets either to engage all three of the Allies or to appear arbitrary by holding only the American convoy. During the discussion, McNamara telephoned Rusk, who explained the proposal. McNamara agreed. Rusk then telephoned McGeorge Bundy, who undertook to obtain Kennedy's approval.

At eight o'clock, John Thomson from the British Embassy, Jacques Morizet from the French Embassy, and Hans Wieck from the German Embassy assembled in the Operations Center conference room. After some discussion, they all agreed

to put the proposal to their governments with the recommendation that they agree. Berlin Task Force officers then prepared a message informing the Embassy in Bonn, the Mission in Berlin, and General Lemnitzer of the meeting. They also suggested that General Polk urge the British and French Commandants to organize their convoys, so that there would be no delay after government approval was received.

By early in the morning of November 5, the day after the detention began, General Yakubovsky began to realize that the Americans were prepared to wait him out. The GIs were eating hot meals, brought to them by jeep. They had also put up a latrine screen. In an attempt to extricate themselves from the impasse, the Soviet guards asked the GIs to move to the rear of the trucks, so that, if General Yakubovsky approved counting them in the trucks, there would be no delay. General Polk instructed that the request be refused.

During the morning, the French and then the British Governments approved the American proposal that they send convoys and sent instructions to their Commandants in Berlin to proceed. While the convoys were not identical, they were similar and in any event would neither dismount nor lower tailgates. The French convoy arrived at

Babelsberg, just outside Berlin at five in the afternoon. At first the Soviets insisted that the passengers dismount. When the French refused, the Soviet checkpoint commander telephoned his superiors and was instructed after a short wait to process the convoy without dismounting. Before the guards had time to relax, they were confronted by the British convoy. It also refused to dismount and was cleared in forty minutes. Both convoys sped across East Germany and were soon moving by the American convoy and on into West Germany. The Soviets still showed no sign, however, of releasing the Americans.

Back in Washington, Kennedy and his top advisers gathered again in the Cabinet Room of the White House to discuss their next move. By that time there was a growing consensus that it would be necessary to take some "counter-measures."

Throughout the Berlin crisis, there was a great deal of discussion of counter-measures. Literally hundreds, both military and non-military, were considered. The only counter-measures actually carried out, however, further restricted travel by East Germans to the West after the Wall.

After a list of possible measures had been reviewed during the meeting at the White House, it became evident that the most effective one would be to rescind the recent decision to sell the Soviets wheat. As the discussion went on, tension mounted, since it was clear that the convoy could not remain at the checkpoint forever, and no one in the room advocated backing down. Suddenly, someone entered the room and gave the President a note. He read it and smiled. "Gentlemen," he said, "The convoy has been released." The meeting broke up.

When the participants arrived back at their offices, they learned that the convoy had in fact not been released. The Soviets had agreed to let it go without dismounting but refused to remove the threat of the armored personnel carriers before processing the convoy. General Polk, backed by his higher headquarters, declined to let the convoy process until the Soviets stopped menacing it with loaded machine guns. Finally, the Soviets agreed, and the Soviet troops were removed from the Autobahn. The US convoy left the checkpoint for Berlin at two o'clock in the morning on November 6--41 hours after it had first been detained.

#### 4. Soviet-Allied "Agreement"

Shortly after this incident, General Yakubovsky sent the Soviet reply to the Allied message regarding convoy procedures. He noted that the Allies were apparently unclear regarding Soviet rules and set forth a set of Soviet procedures. These differed slightly from those laid down by the Allies but were almost completely compatible. In other words, without explicitly agreeing to the Allied position, Khrushchev implicitly assured Kennedy that he did not want another confrontation on the Autobahn. Thereafter, convoys rolled up and down the Autobahn without significant disputes over procedures.

In his biography of Kennedy, Theodore Sorenson spoke of these incidents as an "unseemly squabble." Kennedy himself was obviously not enthusiastic about this dispute, particularly since it cut across his attempts to improve relations with the Kremlin. He had, however, approved the Allied planning on which the response was based the year before. And once into the dispute, he recognized that the Allies could not lightly acquiesce in every new rule levied by the Soviets! As Kennedy remarked at one point, it is not a question of the individual procedures but who is going to determine them.

What is harder to explain is why all this fuss was necessary to work out an "agreement." Why could it not



have been done through diplomatic channels? We will never know the answer to this for certain, since it was not tried. It should be noted, however, that it was the Soviets who were trying to alter established procedures. Since they did not take the initiative to open discussions, there is an implication that they were more interested in bringing pressure to bear on the Allies than working out an agreement. For their part, prior to the incidents the Allies were not even able to work out an agreement among themselves, and this was a prerequisite to any approach to the Soviets.

It thus took two serious incidents to force the Allies to work out agreed procedures and for the Soviets to acquiesce in them. The incidents accomplished this by forcing the highest levels of the governments to focus their attention on the problem at the same time. Once Khrushchev had done this, he decided not only to avoid future disputes over convoy procedures but that it was about time to wind up the 1961 Berlin crisis.

## CHAPTER 7 - DENOUEMENT: KHRUSCHEV THROWS IN THE TOWEL

The Autobahn incidents were the final thrces of the Berlin crisis. Even before they erupted, Kennedy and Khrushchev realized they had reached an impasse. Khrushchev recognized after the Cuban missile crisis that any farther efforts to improve his bargaining position would involve immense risks. For his part, Kennedy understood that any kind of an agreement on Berlin was beyond his reach.

Besides, the world was weary of hearing about Berlin. After occupying the headlines for several years, it moved to the inside pages or even disappeared. Secretary Rusk repeatedly emphasized to visitors that this was exactly where he proposed to keep it.

The spotlight moved to other crises. Above all, America began to devote more and more attention to the other side of the world--Viet Nam. By coincidence, the assassination of Diem came in the midst of the Autobahn incidents, and Kennedy had occasion to discuss both with his advisers during the same meeting. Shortly after President Kennedy's assassination, which occurred immediately after the Autobahn incidents ended, crises exploded in Cyprus and then in Panama.

Americans received a sharp reminder that East Germany still bristled with Soviet forces in January, 1964. A jet T-39 aircraft on a routine training flight over West Germany

accidentally flew into East Germany. The Soviets had improved their air defenses after the two<sup>West</sup>/German fighters strayed into Berlin in 1961. Minutes after the T-39 crossed the border, it was headed toward the ground in flames, with three American officers aboard. Six weeks later, a Soviet fighter shot down an RB-66 reconnaissance bomber, which also lost its way and flew into East Germany. Only the navigator, Lt. Harold W. Welch, survived. Washington protested both incidents, but history quickly closed behind them.

In Berlin, meanwhile, after years of lightning and thunder, the sun had peeped from behind the clouds.

#### 1. The Christmas Passes

You will recall that the East Germans were not the only victims of the wall. When Ulbricht attempted to open offices in West Berlin to issue passes to West Berliners who wished to travel to East Berlin, Mayor Brandt asked the Allied Commandants to close them. Brandt felt that he could not-- particularly on the heels of the division of the city-- allow Ulbricht to have a "presence" in West Berlin. The net result was that West Berliners were not allowed to visit their friends and relatives in East Berlin.

In January, 1963, the West German representative in Berlin, Felix von Eckardt, was reported to have offered \$100 million in credits if Ulbricht would lift this ban.

Ulbricht countered a few days later at the 6th Party Congress. He suggested that German problems should be discussed at three levels: the four powers, East and West Germany, and East Germany and West Berlin. You should notice that he did not offer talks between East and West Berlin but between East Germany and West Berlin. Ulbricht had maintained for some time that East Berlin was a part of the German Democratic Republic--indeed its capital. His object, therefore, was to establish a dialogue with Mayor Brandt, in order to support his argument that West Berlin was a "Free City." This meant above all that Bonn had no authority there and could not speak for the West Berliners.

This picture was complicated by differences between the Allies and Bonn over the status of West Berlin. Under the terms of the West German Basic Law (constitution), Berlin was considered a part of the Federal Republic. The Allies had, however, suspended this provision, since they believed it essential that they retain their authority in the city. They then worked out an arrangement for the Federal government to extend laws to Berlin under Allied aegis and to locate various Ministries there. Thus, in raising the question of the relationship between Bonn and Berlin, Ulbricht was touching a sensitive spot.

When, in early December, 1963, the East German regime offered to discuss with Brandt travel by West Berliners through the wall, it precipitated an intensive three-way negotiation. Bonn initially proposed to carry on talks through Kurt Leopold, head of its trade office in West Berlin, who had been dealing with the East German regime for years. When Ulbricht refused, Brandt flew to Bonn and exacted an agreement from Chancellor Erhard that Brandt's man could act as Bonn's agent. After marathon talks, agreement was reached on December 17, which provided for East German postal officials to issue passes in twelve schools in West Berlin. Between December 20 and January 5, 1964, over a million West Berliners took advantage of this agreement to travel again to the eastern sector.

Encouraged by this success in breaching the wall, Brandt pledged to do everything he could to extend the arrangement. After all, he said, "it serves no purpose to make yourself at home in the trenches of the endless talking war, as we have done in the last few years." Chancellor Erhard, on returning from a visit to Washington, cautioned against undermining the status of West Berlin. This was the responsibility of the occupying powers and the Federal Republic. "Any attempt to misplace these responsibilities onto the Berlin Senate alone. . . would be a complication which might be significant for the future status of Berlin."

Despite this apparent divergence, an agreement was soon reached on a basis for reopening talks with the East Germans. No agreement was reached, however, on a basis for issuing passes during the Easter holiday, and West Berliners were not able to move through the wall again until the following Christmas. Before Christmas rolled around again, however, Khrushchev decided to write finis on his Berlin crisis.

## 2. The Soviet-East German Treaty

On May 29, 1964, Ulbricht arrived in Moscow on one of his periodic visits. Allied capitals had learned that these trips frequently presaged some new move regarding Germany or Berlin. This one was no exception. The Allies, however, learned about the results in an unprecedented manner. Concerned lest they misinterpret and perhaps over-react, Khrushchev sent his Ambassadors in Washington, London, and Paris into the Foreign Offices. Ambassador Dobrynin called on Secretary Rusk on June 10 and informed him of the Soviet intention to sign a treaty with the East Germans two days later.

This precipitated a round of consultations between Allied capitals, with the Washington Ambassadorial Group as the focal point. The Group quickly agreed that the Allies

should communicate with the Kremlin before any treaty was signed, reserving their rights in Berlin. A text was worked out and submitted to governments, who promptly instructed their Ambassadors in Moscow to deliver the statement to the Soviet Foreign Office.

Khrushchev and Ulbricht signed their treaty on June 12. It was called a Treaty of Friendship, Mutual Assistance, and Cooperation. The agreement added very little to the picture. In addition to the usual support for the German Democratic Republic, the signatories confirmed their determination to defend its existing frontiers. For some reason which is not clear, the treaty also reaffirmed the Potsdam Agreement. Berlin was almost overlooked, except for a brief article which stated, "The high contracting parties will regard West Berlin as an independent political unit." The treaty made no reference to Allied troops or to access.

The text of the treaty was in fact so innocent that one must wonder why it was signed at all. Having threatened a peace treaty for six years, perhaps Khrushchev felt that he had to do something toward carrying out this commitment to Ulbricht. The timing was probably explained by the fact that Chancellor Erhard was meeting at that time with President Johnson in Washington.

After examining the text of the treaty, President Johnson and Chancellor Erhard quickly agreed that it altered nothing. Nevertheless, they emphasized in their communique "that no unilateral move by the Soviet Union could in any way affect the rights of the Three Western Powers or modify the obligations and responsibilities of the Soviet Union with respect to Germany and Berlin." Although the treaty appeared to pose no immediate threat to Berlin, Johnson and Erhard "stressed that the Soviet Union would be solely responsible for the consequences of any attempt at interference with Allied rights that might result from implementation of the new treaty."

This communique represented only the preliminary reaction of the two governments to the treaty. A working group of the quadripartite Ambassadorial Group set to work promptly to prepare a more considered response. This took a bit of time and was finally issued in the form of a declaration on June 26, two weeks after the signature of the treaty.

The declaration was in fact a rather comprehensive statement of the Allied attitude regarding a number of thorny questions. After refuting the Khrushchev-Ulbricht claim that West Berlin was an "independent political unit," the declaration went on to explain the relationship between the Allies, West Berlin, and the Federal Republic. "While reserving



their rights relating to Berlin, the Three Western Powers. . . have authorized. . . the establishment of close ties between Berlin and the Federal Republic of Germany. . ." With regard to the touchy issue of frontiers, the declaration recalled that "according to the very agreement to which the agreement of June 12 refers (Potsdam), the final determination of the frontiers of Germany must await a peace settlement for the whole of Germany."

While it was easy to fall back on this established formula to cover the western position on frontiers, the question of any discussions with the Soviets was another matter. The Germans had been pushing for some time for an Allied initiative on German unification. This had, however, always run up against American, British, and French reluctance. Despite this divergence, the declaration concluded by saying that "the three governments are always ready to take advantage of any opportunity which would peacefully reestablish German unity in freedom."

Thus did another phase of the Berlin crisis end, with the signature of the Soviet-East German treaty and the issuance of an Allied declaration. After all the anguish and effort, it was certainly an anti-climax. No one was sorry, however, to see the Berlin crisis disappear into history.

## CONCLUSION

In the Introduction, I noted that there were four threads to this story of the 1961-64 phase of the Berlin crisis.

The first was that the crisis was a test of wills between a new American President and a veteran Soviet leader. In many ways, it was the test of wills between Kennedy and Khrushchev, which stretched over much of Kennedy's brief administration. He probably devoted more time and thought to it than any other single problem. Although the new administration came into office on a wave of optimism, Kennedy realized at Vienna that stormy weather lay ahead. He recognized explicitly in his July 25 speech that Berlin was to provide a testing ground, and he accepted the challenge. Although he proceeded with caution - caution which some mistook at times for weakness - he never wavered from his determination to defend the people of West Berlin. Moreover, he backed this with an increased military preparedness, including the strategic forces, and reinforced American forces in Europe. After several probes, Khrushchev hesitated in the face of the risks he was running in Europe, and raised the stakes by sending missiles to Cuba. When his bluff was called, he had lost the game in Berlin - and knew it. Thus, while Kennedy may have been a neophyte as compared with Khrushchev, he played a good hand well and won.

The second thread was the critical incidents this contest precipitated. In reviewing the period between 1961 and 1964, one cannot help but be impressed by the number and variety of sub-crises. The greatest tension undoubtedly occurred just before and after the division of the city. When the other incidents have been forgotten, the wall will remain a tragic reminder of some of the darkest days of the crisis. On the other hand, the Soviets made very little mileage on the access routes. Although they had promised to turn control of Allied traffic over to the East Germans, they were unwilling in the end to place themselves so fully in Ulbricht's hands. Despite their harrassments, at the end of the crisis, Allied traffic still moved freely to and from Berlin, both on the ground and in the air. While, therefore, Kennedy did not emerge from the crisis unscratched, the three vital interests he had defined in 1961 (Allied presence, access, and viability) remained intact.

The efforts to apply traditional diplomatic techniques, the third thread, could either be considered a success or a failure. It depends on what one considers its goals. If the objective was to reach an agreement with the Soviets on Berlin, it was doomed from the outset. It is hard to conceive of any new arrangement on which the United States,

its Allies, and the Soviets could have agreed. Certainly no proposal advanced by either side provided the basis for agreement. It is doubtful, however, that either Kennedy or Rusk were ever very hopeful. They wanted above all to provide Khrushchev with an alternative to unilateral action. The search for the basis for negotiation clearly did this. What is harder to say is how much of a role negotiations played in Khrushchev's calculations. It is doubtful that he ever expected to diddle the Allies out of Berlin. Although he manipulated talks and action very skillfully, particularly during the air incidents in early 1962, he was not skillful enough. While the West was divided on negotiations, it was united on preserving its position in Berlin, and this precluded Khrushchev's talking them out of the city.

The fourth thread was the struggle to adjust the conduct of business to an impatient President in a nuclear world. Kennedy and his advisers moved into the White House dissatisfied with the State Department, which they considered unimaginative. By the time Kennedy returned from Vienna, it was clear that he would not be satisfied to have Berlin handled through regular channels. He wanted someone in charge on a full-time basis, backed by an inter-agency staff. The bureaucracy's answer to this demand was the Berlin Task Force, headed by Foy Kohler. While the performance of this

group was far from perfect, it was by any standard good. After an initial period of confusion, during which it was getting organized and dealing with the crisis at the same time, it gradually picked up steam until by the end of 1961 it was going full blast. Since there is a strong propensity in any organization to want to get back to "normal," it was not easy to hold a team together when tensions relaxed. The task force kept going, however, throughout the crisis, even though the pace varied. It was in fact a pioneer in the United States Government in inter-agency planning and operations.

The management of the Berlin problem was, however, not limited to the Berlin Task Force or Washington. The quadripartite Ambassadorial Group coordinated the policies of the United States, Britain, France, and Germany better than they were ever coordinated before or, unfortunately, since. This group was matched by similar bodies in Bonn and Berlin and--for military aspects--in Paris. By the end of the crisis, these groups had prepared a complex set of plans and were serviced by a sophisticated communications system.

Nor should the importance of all this machinery be underestimated. The problem in any given situation was not only what to do but also to get agreement on a course of action. Since decisions sometimes had to be taken in a

matter of hours and three Commandants, six Embassies, several military headquarters, and five governments were frequently involved, it was essential to have some reasonably orderly way of conducting business.

When you combine these four threads, you have the story of the 1961-1964 Berlin crisis, along with Cuba the main foreign policy event of the Kennedy years.

It should be noted that this account leaves one intriguing question unanswered. What were Khrushchev's motives? I must confess myself still baffled as to why he chose to precipitate the crisis originally in 1958. While he and Ulbricht did not like the situation in Berlin, they can scarcely have found it intolerable. Perhaps Khrushchev simply thought it was time to tidy up the Berlin anomaly. Once into the struggle, he probably felt bound to pursue with Kennedy the dialogue which he had begun with Eisenhower. Khrushchev was not, however, required to press his case as hard as he did during 1961 and 1962, both in Berlin and Cuba. Since it is hard to reconcile the risks he ran with the gains he could hope for just in Berlin, he was evidently playing for a larger prize. This could be stated in various ways, but it clearly involved an improvement in the Soviet Union's power position vis-a-vis the United States.

I would like to be able to say that this is the end of the story, that there will be no further crises over Berlin. Unfortunately, this is not possible. While the East German regime probably does not feel as threatened by West Berlin, it would still like very much to obtain control over Allied surface and air access to Berlin. If it should attempt to do this, it would precipitate a dispute which could lead to another serious crisis. Although we can hope that the Kremlin has learned some lessons from the 1948 and 1961 crises, it is always possible that it will repeat Stalin's and Khrushchev's mistakes. I certainly hope not, because I am convinced that the United States and its Allies intend to remain in Berlin.

## BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

While a few of the documents on the Berlin crisis have yet to be published, most of them were released to the press. Documents on Germany, 1944-1961, prepared by the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations is an excellent collection but unfortunately it stops in September, 1961. American Foreign Policy, Current Documents, 1961 (Department of State Publication 7808) extends through the remainder of the year. Another invaluable collection, which goes into 1963, is Documents on Berlin, 1943-1963, issued under the auspices of the Research Institute of the German Society for Foreign Affairs, Bonn, and published by R. Oldenbourg Verlag, Munich, in 1963. Finally, for documents related to the Soviet-East German treaty in 1964, one can use the Documents on American Foreign Relations, published annually by Harper and Row for the Council on Foreign Relations.

Arthur Schlesinger's A Thousand Days contains information concerning some significant documents which have yet to be published.

Students of the Berlin crisis are indebted to Joseph G. Whelan of the Library of Congress Legislative Reference Service for his Berlin: A Chronological Summary with an Analytical Commentary. Its two parts are excellent chronological summaries of Washington Post and New York Times coverage of the crisis from July 1959 until the end of 1961.